Proceedings. APAC-ELT Conference 2017

METHODOLOGY
EAP, SUBTITLING, ATMOSPHERE

CHILDREN
STORYTELLING, AUTISM, FITNESS

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES
E-TWINNING, VIDEO MANIPULATION

APAC ELT JOURNAL

Times of change

So many things have happened since the last issue of the APAC ELT Journal came out that it is difficult to decide what to focus on (if, indeed, we still have the right to decide on anything). Before anything else happens that takes away the smidgeon of freedom of expression still left to us and the tenuous freedom of the press still enjoyed by the media here (the non-public media, that is), we will exercise our right to decide what to bring up in this editorial. So, let's see what decisions we make, and which of us have constitutions strong enough to accept this.

The first order of business is that we now have a new Board. In fact, it constitutes a change in generation. We are led by a group of young, dynamic, innovative go-getters! Their enthusiasm is contagious, and you'll be seeing new approaches to everything we do. Feel free to comment on our endeavors and suggest more ways we can be of service to you.

Another big change is the date of our annual ELT Conference. This year, it will be from February 1st to 3rd. So, mark your calendars accordingly!

> Be the change that you wish to see in the world.
>
> Mahatma Gandhi

A third change is with our webpage and e-mail address. We wanted to revamp the webpage, and due to technical difficulties, we had to set up a new one: www.apac365.org. This led to changing our e-mail address, as well, to make it coincide with the new address: info@apac365.org. We encourage you to visit the page and check out all the different sections. But, please be patient with us over the next few months, as we flesh out the content, fix glitches, and do a little trial-and-error learning.

In the realm of teaching in Catalonia, we are faced with new changes and challenges. In the wake of the August terrorist attacks, teachers are being called upon to learn how to detect budding radicals among their students. In a way, it's like asking us to signal who might fall prey to a sect someday (following a charismatic leader, eschewing friends and family, becoming willing to fight and die for a very orthodox belief and way of living, etc.) or who might develop a mental illness (an obsessive/compulsive disorder, paranoia, etc.). It's a very tricky call – it wouldn't be good to stigmatize someone early in life without an ironclad justification for it. Likewise, with the political situation in Catalonia and all over Spain, we have to be very prudent with what we say and do in our roles as teachers. One thing is promoting critical thinking and the exercise of the right to free speech, and another thing is sowing the seeds of discord among students, colleagues and families and allowing them to take root and grow. It is difficult to offer advice on this, so we will just say that wisdom is called for.

Speaking of wisdom, it is now time to turn to the content of the present issue of our journal. There is quite a lot that can be learned from the different articles. **Julie Waddington** tells us how to use storytelling to promote collaborative language learning between older primary school students and younger ones. She presents a good project. **Eva Vigil** discusses autistic children and how to help them learn. It is a very informative article and a must-read for all teachers, as more and more of these kinds of learners will be mainstreamed into our classrooms and we have to know how to reach them, nurture them, and meet their cognitive, social and affective needs. We are hoping that Eva will follow up this article with one discussing how she taught English to an autistic student, telling us what worked and what didn't. **Fina Vendrell** describes an eTwinning project spanning three countries and promoting healthy habits. It's a project that involved the school and the community as a whole. Hopefully it will inspire others to participate in projects with other schools and take learning beyond the walls, boundaries, and borders that surround our students. **Annabel Fernández** and **Fiona Parker** discuss English for Academic Purposes and help university instructors and other specialists come to grips with what this area entails. **Raquel Gómez** and **Júlia Barón** shed light on the area of pragmatics, a very necessary part of language learning, but one that is often overlooked. And **Ian Gibbs** offers us a wider perspective on teaching: what we can do to connect with our students.

Enjoy the articles, and keep your wits about you!!!

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APAC JOURNAL

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Contents

Proceedings: APAC-ELT Convention 2017

Editor's Note 1

Opening Speech by Then APAC President, Miquel Berga 4

2016 APAC - British Council John McDowell Award 7

Convocatòria i bases: 2017 John McDowell Award 10

2017 Convention Assessment 11

2018 APAC-ELT Convention: *Rethinking Teaching: New Challenges, New Solutions* 14

Articles:

Competency-Based ELT: Learning to Learn through *Our Storytelling Circle*, by Julie Waddington 16

An Autistic Child Learning English as a Foreign Language, by Eva Vigil Aran 27

Nutri Fit Cruise, by Fina Vendrell Vila 35

EAP: A Challenge for Teachers and Learners, by Annabel Fernández and Fiona Parker 39

"I'm Afraid I Can't Agree with You": Teaching Pragmatics in English as a Foreign Language Contexts, by Raquel Gómez and Júlia Barón 48

The Use of Active Subtitling in a Foreign Language Classroom, by Sònia González Cruz 59

More Happy Elephants, by Ian Gibbs 67

Proceedings: APAC-ELT Convention 2017

Opening Speech by Then APAC President, Miquel Berga

Senyora Montserrat Llobet, Directora General d'Educació Secundària Obligatòria i Batxillerat, Mr Richard Rooze, Director of the British Council in Barcelona, dear friends and colleagues:

It is a great pleasure to see you back – or for the first time – in this auditorium for the opening of our APAC ELT Convention. Welcome. Benvinguts. Bienvenidos. There are a lot of people who make this event what it is, but I want to express my special gratitude to all the members of our board, with special thanks to Silvia Borrell and Miquel Breton who manage to carry their considerable burden gracefully. I'd also like to mention our former Vice-President, Neus Figueras, who, not being on our board any longer, is ready as ever to give APAC a hand when needed. Thank you, Neus. We should not forget, though, that nothing would be possible nor would make any sense without the loyal support (and fees duly paid) of APAC's membership. Thank you all. Consider one fact: This is APAC's 31st International Convention. We can proudly say that APAC has been part of the educational landscape of this country for some generations now. I should take this opportunity to let you know that I have had the privilege of serving as APAC President for the last 17 years and that makes more than half the years of APAC's history. Can I humbly suggest that this seems a reasonable enough period of time for you to consider getting rid of this President? I am fully convinced that there are enough human resources in APAC's big family to make sure we can have someone else to address this audience in February next year. I beg you to take my words seriously for the sake of APAC's good health, and perhaps my own. Thank you.

It is often said that teaching English – and teaching in general for that matter – has become an increasingly complex profession to deal with. We are in the middle of a technological revolution of still unknown personal and social consequences. In the meantime, English teachers at all educational levels are expected to be some sort of acrobatic multi-taskers. We have to be able to manage time efficiently, show empathy, be emotionally intelligent, challenge, motivate and inspire students, and establish effective group dynamics... you name it! And on top of everything there are the political uncertainties that are looming over our world, locally and internationally. In our classrooms we also play significant and decisive roles in the ways of the world. Commenting on the contents of the recent issue of the APAC ELT Journal, our editorial board wrote that: "*The world is in quite a state of turmoil, and it would behoove a great many influential people to reflect on what they are doing. Teachers also wield a great deal of power, and we need to remind ourselves of that from time to time. It's so easy to get caught up in the day-to-day business of helping students learn the difference between the past simple and the present perfect that we don't pay enough attention to the non-curricular aspects of our jobs: how we affect our students as people. We can raise them up, and we can tear them down. And it's the little things that matter, things that we may not realize or things that we are in too much of a hurry to deal with.*" And they concluded: "*This issue of the Journal contains many reflections that will make you pause and take stock of yourself*." I want to use my time today to follow this suggestion and I thought I would start my address by reading a very short but relevant fragment of one of the articles published in our Journal. It was submitted to us by Vasiliki Sarantidou with the title:

A Journal of Teaching and Learning in a Multi-Cultural School in Thessaloniki

The First Day

I had heard the expression 'to be thrown in at the deep end' and I thought I knew what it meant. After all, I have been teaching English for about thirty years. In my time, I have taught all levels, all ages, both in the private and the public sector, in big cities, small towns and villages – all over the country (...) I have had the pleasure of teaching well-behaved, highly motivated students and I have seen them make real progress in acquiring English. However, I have also experienced the horror of coping with rowdy, adolescent young men – and a few rowdy young ladies – whose hormones seemed to be totally out of control and who seemed incapable – or unwilling – to learn anything: their only reason for coming to class seemed to be to make my life difficult;(...).

But no students I had ever taught before could have prepared me for my first classes at the Multicultural School in the centre of Thessaloniki at the beginning of the current school year. My experience in this school would require me to rethink much of what I had taken for granted as a teacher and – in some cases – as a person.

My new school is one of the two in Thessaloniki which host refugees from countries at war (Syria, Afghanistan) but also children of economic migrants from countries as diverse as China, Albania, Turkey, Pakistan and Russia. Some of my new students live in the neighbourhood of the school with their immigrant parents while others are brought in to the city centre on buses arranged by NGOs. There are some Greek students, too, all with difficult home backgrounds. (...) From the very first day in my new school, I was impressed by the fact that the prefix 'multi-' was relevant to every aspect of the work done at the school: it covered a wide range of diverse people and situations; it literally contained 'multitudes'. (...) Diversity was the name of the game, and I would need to learn to cope with this diversity in all its dimensions in a very short time."

As you know, we have awarded this article a special mention in this year's APAC-British Council McDowell prizes. We felt compelled to do that in the context of the implicit suggestion in the motto of our Convention: "The ins and outs of an ever-changing profession". **Vasiliki Sarantidou,** the author of this "Teaching and Learning Journal", bears witness to the plight and the suffering of millions of displaced people in the heart of Europe, but also to the potential of language teaching in extreme situations. Our Greek colleague records the way she faced a difficult, tragic context and how she decided to take action with her tools, the tools of a teacher of English. Her testimony reinforces the old idea that only the ones who are willing to learn have the right to teach, and her article (written with the help of one of APAC's lifelong friends, Luke Prodromou) sounds incredibly inspirational for teachers under pressure and casts hopeful light on the potential of teaching and language as essential bridges in crossing boundaries to identify our common humanity. It deals with a teacher's growth through taking stock, reflecting and implementing teaching practices that really focus on students as people, as individuals with experiences, needs, and emotions that have to be well cared for. Her students are refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia and other countries wracked by war, famine, and other scourges of today's world. They've been through a lot, and Sarantidou discusses how she had to change in order to re-motivate them for learning and for piecing their lives back together. It is another example of how influential we can be, for good or for bad, and how important it is for us to develop practices that promote positive outcomes in the many facets of our students' lives.

The day after I read that article I came across a poem that could have been used as a coda to Vasiliki's testimony. It is called "Refugee Blues". I would like to read just a few stanzas from it as a sort of tribute to the work of teachers like our Greek friends:

Refugee Blues
Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's no place for us.

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,
Look in the atlas and you'll find it there:
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,
Every spring it blossoms anew:
Old passports can't do that, my dear, old passports can't do that.

The consul banged the table and said,
"If you've got no passport you're officially dead":
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.

Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;
Asked me politely to return next year:
But where shall we go to-day, my dear, but where shall we go to-day?

Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said;
"If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread":
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors:
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

The interesting thing is that this poem was written in 1939 by the English poet W. H. Auden. He had in mind then the Jewish persecution in Nazi Germany. The fact that today, almost 80 years later, those lines resonate so vividly in our imagination and sound so descriptive of life in our times is a reminder of one obvious fact: the great battles for a better world have to be fought and won by every generation. With this in mind I wish you all a good, exciting convention.

Thank you.

Back to the table of contents

Montserrat Llobet, Miquel Berga and Richard Rooze.

A packed hall for the opening ceremony.

2016 APAC-British Council John McDowell Award

The judging panel's verdict:

For **Type C, projects presented by classes,** the panel of judges has awarded an **Honourable Mention** and a **First Prize**.

- **Honourable Mention:** This is accompanied by a 100-euro voucher for educational material.

The Honourable Mention was awarded to **the 6th-grade students of Antina Elementary School** in Torredembarra for their project, ***Customized Virtual Library for the Little Ones***, in which they engaged in collaborative reading with 1st-grade students. They were guided by their teacher, **M. Luisa Forjan**.

Recipients of the Honourable Mention in Type C.

- **First Prize:** This is accompanied by a 300-euro voucher for educational material.

The First Prize went to the project ***English Day***. It was a project that promoted the learning of English through enjoyable, transversal activities, like music and theatre. It was presented by **the students of ESO, Baccalaureate and Occupational Training** in **Baix Camp High School** in Reus and their teacher, **Miquel Arcas**.

Recipients of First Prize in Type C.

For **Type B , research projects presented by Baccalaureate students,** the judges awarded two **Honourable Mentions** and a **First Prize**. The judges would like to highlight the fact that all of the research projects that we received were of a very high level in terms of English and dealt with very interesting topics.

- **Honourable Mention:** This is accompanied by a 100-euro voucher for specialised material.

It went to the research project ***Myanmar, The Smileland***, a very thorough report by a person who valued the privilege of travelling with her family to Myanmar and giving an exhaustive and well documented account of it. The author is **Marina Vilà**, from **Escola Diocescana de Navàs**, and she was guided by **Ceci Balaguer**.

Miquel Berga and Marina Vilà.

- **Honourable Mention:**

It was awarded to **Pol Trigo**, from **Ferrer i Guàrdia High School** in Sant Joan Despí for his research project, ***The Influence of the 1970s Black Music in Hip Hop***. In this study, the author analyses the musical and cultural roots of hip hop, a genre of music that we have perhaps not seen in all of its complexity yet. He was guided by **M. Rosa Ena**.

Miquel Berga, Pol Trigo and M. Rosa Ena.

- **First Prize:** This is accompanied by a Tablet.

It went to **Júlia Ribera** for her research project ***Charity Work Is Possible.*** In it, she chronicles her adventure in getting sport material to a group of young people in Burkina Faso. Ms Ribera studies at **Guillem de Bergadà High School** in Berga, and she was guided in her project by **Cristina Arnau.**

Miquel Berga and Marina Ribera.

In regard to **<u>Type A, projects presented by teachers</u>**, the panel of judges awarded an Honourable Mention and a First Prize.

- **Honourable Mention:** This is accompanied by a 200-euro voucher for specialized material.

  It was awarded to **M. de l'Esperança Amill Rocamora** for her project, **Let's Play and Speak English**, in which she used music, theatre and a game-show format to promote verbal interaction, communication, collaboration and the integration of special-needs students.

Picture of Esperança Amill's project.

- **First Prize:** This is accompanied by a course in the United Kingdom sponsored by the British Council.

  It was awarded to **Cares Díaz** for her project entitled **24 Hour Global Blind Date: A CLIL Project**, which engaged 4th-grade students in geography and turned them into global citizens.

Poster about Cares Díaz's project.

Finally, the judges would like to add one more thing, which, though being last, does not make it the least. A month or so before the 2017 Conference, professor Luke Prodromou sent APAC an article by a teacher named Vicky Sarantidou, who works in a public school of high complexity in Thessaloniki. He personally had devoted time to observing her and lending support to her in her endeavours.

Although this article, **A Journal of Teaching and Learning in a Multi-Cultural School in Thessaloniki**, was not aimed at participating in the APAC – British Council John McDowell awards, the judging panel decided to give it a Special Mention, for dealing with an exemplary experience in responding to the high complexity of educational environments. With this Special Mention, the judges would like to express their support and admiration for the work of this teacher who is working in extreme situations, and, by extension, for the work of all the teachers in our own country who are carrying out their tasks in situations similarly difficult and often adverse.

By way of conclusion, the judges would like to congratulate all the participants on their fine work, and they would also like to encourage everyone to present a project for the 2017 APAC-British Council John McDowell Award.

Back to the table of contents

It's a team effort!

Convocatòria i Bases: 2017 John McDowell Award

S'obre la convocatòria dels premis adreçada a professorat o futur professorat de llengua anglesa, que siguin membres de l'associació, per treballs portats a terme durant el 2017, amb les següents

BASES

MODALITAT A
Premi individual adreçat a professorat o futur professorat de qualsevol tram educatiu obligatori i post-obligatori que presenti des d'un treball enfocat a la reflexió o la recerca en el camp de l'ELT fins a disseny de programació d'aula o experiències concretes. En el cas d'experiències, és imprescindible introducció, objectius i conclusió.

MODALITAT B
Premi individual adreçat a alumnat de Batxillerat que presenti un treball de recerca en llengua anglesa que pot estar relacionat amb qüestions de llengua i cultura, o bé amb altres camps, realitzat durant el curs anterior. Cal que el professor/a i/o tutor/a faci una breu presentació del treball i de l'alumne/a.

MODALITAT C
Premi col·lectiu adreçat a professorat i al seu alumnat que presentin activitats d'ensenyament-aprenentatge fetes a l'aula i/o en entorns virtuals etc., durant el curs anterior. Imprescindible que vagin precedides d'una introducció, objectius, continguts i conclusió del professor/a que les presenta així com que s'apreciï i es pugui valorar la feina feta per l'alumnat.

PREMIS
Per a cada modalitat, hi haurà dos tipus de reconeixement: un Premi per al millor projecte i un Accèssit per al segon més ben valorat.

JURAT I VEREDICTE
El jurat estarà format per membres de la Junta d'APAC i els assessors/es que es consideri oportú. El resultat es farà públic durant l'*Opening Session* de l'edició 2018 del Congrés i es comunicarà amb antelació suficient als guanyadors/es per tal que puguin assistir a l'acte de lliurament. L'acta dels premis es publicarà en la revista d'APAC corresponent.

PROCEDIMENTS

La llengua vehicular del concurs és l'anglès.

En totes les candidatures hi haurà de constar:

- La modalitat a què es presenta el treball
- Nom complet del candidat/a o de la persona responsable de presentar el treball
- Nivell educatiu o curs (en el cas de la modalitat C)
- Adreça postal, e-mail i telèfon de contacte.
- Nom, adreça i telèfon del centre educatiu, si escau.

Les candidatures es poden presentar durant tot l'any, fins a 15 de desembre de 2017 en suport paper per correu postal o electrònic a:

- C/ Girona nº53 Baixos 08009 Barcelona
- info@apac365.org

APAC es reserva el dret de publicar total o parcialment els treballs presentats a la revista i/o al seu web.

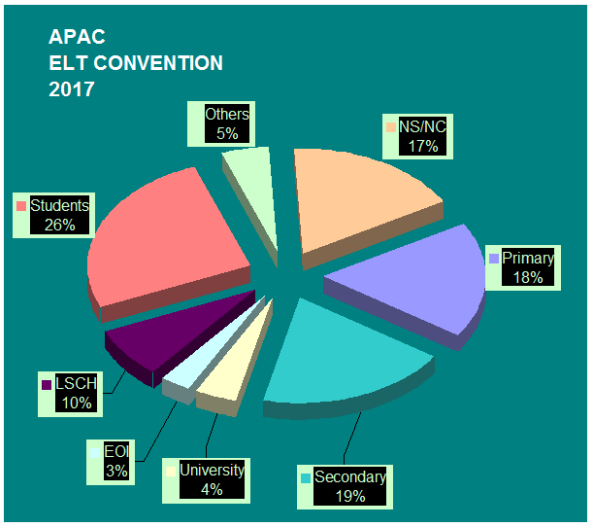
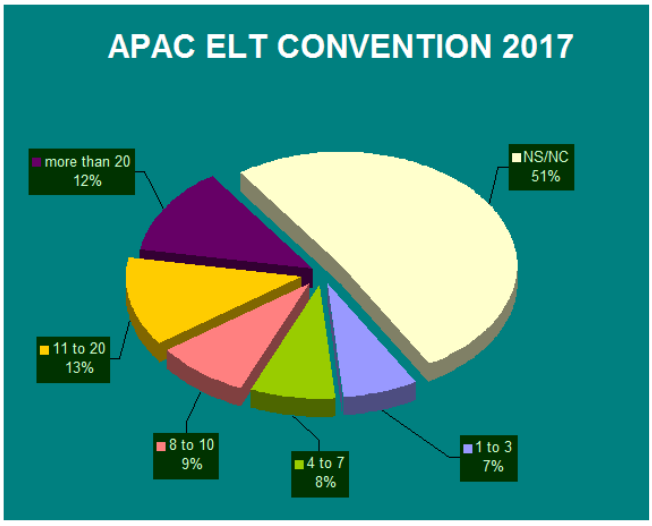
APAC no es responsabilitza dels treballs no recollits abans del 31 de maig de 2018.

2017 Convention Assessment

Dear friends and colleagues,

It is a pleasure, once again, to present the results of the APAC ELT Convention 2017, held in Barcelona on February 16th-18th. The motto this year was "Teaching English … What Else? The Ins and Outs of An Ever-Changing Profession", and the idea behind it was to tackle the many challenges that the teaching profession encounters day after day inside and beyond the classroom and how it responds to a rapidly evolving environment.

Let's get an overall view of the event through a few figures: 402 registrations, 55 different speakers in 48 sessions, a help team of more than 15 volunteers, the regular technical and administrative support from the UPF and 15 exhibitors and sponsors displaying their ELT-related materials in the exhibition hall. The profiles of attendees change very slightly year after year and respond to the following groups: 18% to Primary, 19% to Secondary, 3% to EOI, 10% to language schools, 4% to university, 26% to master's students from different universities and there's 17% who do not answer. We take this information from the attendees' agendas. This is why we keep insisting on your filling them in with as much data as possible, as this helps us, the executive board, in designing a convention that does its best to meet the most people's training needs.

Graph 1. Professional field	Graph 2. Years of teaching
	

If we look at contents and levels, the programme featured fifteen sessions addressed to Primary and Pre-school, among which three were interlevels, one exclusively for Pre-school and one related to children with special needs. Fourteen more were addressed to Secondary (both specifically or also mixed with Batxillerat, VET and/or adults) and one was specifically for VET in professional contexts. Eighteen were considered of general interest. As for the format, forty-two out of fifty had a workshop or lecture format, five were plenary sessions, plus the usual Friday keynote, APAC's Round Table and the opening ceremony.

On Thursday afternoon, the auditorium hosted more than three hundred teachers, who listened to the addresses given by authorities: Mr. Chris Rooze, the Director of the British Council – Barcelona, Ms Montserrat Llobet, in the name of the Hble. Consellera d'Ensenyament and APAC's president Miquel Berga, who, among other interesting issues you may have already read about on previous pages, announced the end of the 4-year mandate of the then executive board and

encouraged the audience to join the general assembly in May, where a new board was to be elected. This brand new board has begun to carry out its duties with renewed stamina and fresh ideas!

The presenting of the APAC-British Council John McDowell awards is also mandatory during the opening session – read all about the winners and their papers and projects this year in this same issue. APAC is happy to highlight the interesting job of many teachers and students, but we are sure there are many more that deserve the acknowledgment of colleagues. We encourage you to present your candidacies and to spread the word among your peers, as we are sure that many interesting things are going on that we don't know about, yet! After this, our opening speaker, Lindsay Clanfield, developed the idea of bringing the world into the ELT classroom in his speech "The Ins And Outs Of the 'Real-World' in ELT". Teachers described the session as "dynamic", "engaging", "realistic", and "motivating", with a lot of food for thought on the topic. "A perfect start for APAC", someone wrote, followed by the Welcome cava, to help us socialise and meet those colleagues we might not have seen for a year or maybe more …

The following three plenary speeches addressed to a general audience revolved around three different topics: assessment as an effective tool in class by Elaine Boyd from Trinity College, verbal and non-verbal communication skills by Jenny Dooley from Express Publishing-Edebé and the role of ELT in educating global citizens by professor Melinda Dooly from the UAB. The audiences' remarks were mostly positive for the three sessions, with a special accent on Ms Jenny Dooley's sparkling resources.

To finish the day, people were able to choose from among three more proposals: Anne Dwyer's reflection on teacher training practices as the healthiest way to keep up to date with the requirements of the profession, the ICT used by the most resourceful Ricard Garcia and the almost traditional session on Scottish dancing and songs in the exhibition hall led by David Vivanco. Attendees really appreciated the energy of the three speakers so late in the afternoon!

On Friday morning, Katherine Stannet offered the traditional keynote speech to a crowded auditorium, talking about the teachers' role in the global 21st-century classroom and English as the tool to bring in the most diverse social and cultural realities with the support of the wonderful materials of National Geographic-Cengage.

After a short coffee break, we were summoned again to listen to either APAC's Round Table about the ins and outs of project work, Jo Budden's (British Council) reflection on our students' not always easy relationship with the digital world, or APAC's lifelong friend and much loved collaborator Geraldine Laboria, who gave nice tips on how to meet daily challenges and still smile!

On Friday afternoon, after the lunch break, the programme opened up to the regular three strands of hands-on workshops and lectures. Most sessions captured the interest and won the favour of the audience, but those speakers who scored the highest were, in order of appearance, Fina Vendrell with her e-Twinning project "The Nutri Fit Cruise" at 3:00; Donna Lee-Fields' Phenomenon-Based Learning, Pere Parés' insights on communication techniques, Rachel Playfair's Scaffolding Warm-Up Activities and Katherine Stannet's Teaching Students to be Global Explorers, all at 4:30. At 6:00, the champions were Adrià Besalú and Joan Fontanella with Youtube resources, Salvador Rodríguez's approach to CLIL, and Josep Suller's tips for dealing with mistakes. To put an end to a long day, about 30 teachers had fun doing ceilidh dances again until 8:00 pm. And some others chose to follow Kieran Donaghy into Empathy and Inès Rosado with her Top Digital Resources for Primary.

Saturday morning deployed eighteen more proposals. Again, our aim is to feature meaningful lectures and workshops, but it is true that some stand out more than others. In this case, the highest-scoring speakers were Júlia Barón and Raquel Gómez with a session targeting B2-level oral exam indicators, Pere Cortiella on primary classroom management, Carmen Santamaria's lecture on the importance of stress in pronunciation and Ana Zandarin's workshop on writing and creativity. That's about it for the early morning strand. After the coffee break in the exhibition hall, the teachers' scores highlighted the proposals by Róisin Cassidy Barbeito and Samuel Kane on music and drama, Lindsay Clanfield's Sweet Emoji and Emma Reynold's Stress-less workshop. And the 12:45 strand's favourite speakers were M. Luisa Forjan's m-Learning, Marc Hortal on tutorial sessions, Sidney Martin on pronunciation and motivational techniques, and Sigfried Maynegre's display of the nicest books for fostering reading.

The handing out of certificates brought an end to a busy morning and a fruitful convention. This new issue of APAC's digital journal brings together some of the contributions by the February speakers. A big thank you to all those who have rounded out their presentation with an article and have made a new issue possible, meaningful and full of food for thought.

We are now working on the upcoming convention. Remember that you can send us, if you wish, your paper or workshop proposal from September till early November (like every year) and that you can follow the news and progress of the 2018 convention on our website.

See you next February, early February, in Barcelona!

The organising committee

Back to the table of contents

Sing for your supper!

2018 APAC-ELT Convention

Rethinking Teaching: New Challenges, New Solutions

DATES: February 1st, 2nd and 3rd **(EARLIER THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS!!!)**

The 21st century is proving to be an age of changes and uncertainties, a time to question who we are and what drives us. Everything and everyone is in flux, as our classrooms fill with multiple languages, identities and ways of doing. Next year's motto, "Rethinking Teaching: New Challenges, New Solutions", invites you to problematise traditional conceptions and approaches to language teaching and learning, and to share and co-construct new pathways to make our students 21st century citizens – and to turn ourselves into 21st century teachers!

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Back to the table of contents

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Competency-Based ELT: Learning to Learn through *Our Storytelling Circle*

Julie Waddington
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Abstract

General consensus exists that storytelling in the early years promotes early literacy development and can help provide a meaningful context for introducing a foreign language. This paper presents a cyclical project which aims to facilitate transition between educational stages by harnessing the pedagogical potential of authentic storybooks throughout the different stages of compulsory education. While providing learners with a real purpose and stimulus for learning English, the *Storytelling Circle* methodology presented here also develops the transversal competences of the primary curriculum – with a particular focus on the learning to learn competence – as well as the specific dimensions of the foreign language area.

Introduction

Storytelling during the early years

In the context of introducing English at preschool level in Catalan schools, we are reminded that the key to learning second or third languages lies not in *how many* languages we teach, or *when* we teach them, but rather *how* we teach them (Artigal, 2005). As Artigal's narrative methodology emphasises, 'we don't learn a language first and then use it, but rather, we learn it through using it: in other words, we learn to speak by speaking' (Cesire, n.d.). Moreover, we learn to speak by speaking in an interactive process involving other speakers. This principal, shaped by the theoretical findings advanced by Bruner (1983) and other psycholinguists during the 80s and 90s, underpins the focus of this current study. While Artigal's storytelling methodology offers us a meaningful way of introducing English at preschool level, the methodology introduced in this study provides a framework for continuing to work with stories – this time with authentic storybooks – and for harnessing their enormous pedagogical potential, within the context of primary education and, potentially, within the subsequent secondary stage of compulsory education.

Facilitating transition between educational stages

The proposal presented here will thus have particular relevance and resonance for schools that have already incorporated storytelling methodologies into their classrooms, insofar as it offers a way of aiding the transition from one educational stage to the next. Although government guidelines stress the need for teachers and schools to coordinate closely in the transitional period of compulsory education (from primary to secondary education) (Departament d'Ensenyament, 2015), equal attention is also required during the transition from the non-obligatory stage of preschool to the first stage of primary education. The need for close coordination between teachers and schools is thus seen as one of the keys to ensuring holistic approaches to education, which take into account the emotional and social factors involved during transitional phases, as well as the need for methodological coherence and continuity, in order to facilitate transition and promote student engagement throughout this fundamental period of their learning lives. Schools, as the Department of Education document advises, 'must adopt measures to ensure that the transition

between the two stages is successful' (2015). The proposal presented here offers an example of a methodological approach which can be used and adapted through the different stages of childhood education, by continuing to use a resource which students will have come to be fond of and familiar with (storybooks) in a way which corresponds to the different cognitive, social and emotional developmental stages of their primary years.

Competency-based curriculum

Unlike the preschool stage, where the introduction of a foreign language is optional, and during which one of the few stated objectives emphasises the importance of 'bringing the language to life', or 'living the language', and ensuring that language 'work' is contextualised within existing projects and activities (Direcció General de l'Educació Bàsica i el Batxillerat, 2009, pp. 12-13), the task of teaching a foreign language at primary level becomes more complex – or may appear to be more complex – when we consider the general requirements of the new competency-based curriculum and, in particular, when we take into account the specific guidelines for developing and implementing the curriculum in the area of foreign language teaching (Direcció General d'Educació Infantil i Primària, 2015).

The aim of this paper is to show how the Storytelling Circle methodology presented here can help to develop transversal competences – with a particular focus on the learning to learn competence – as well as the specific dimensions to be implemented within the area of foreign language teaching (Direcció General d'Educació Infantil i Primària, 2015). At the same time, the systematic approach to reading and telling stories has particular relevance for the national reading plan known as *Impuls de la lectura*, providing a methodological avenue to be explored and implemented in the foreign language area, in a way which is entirely consistent with the treatment of other languages and other areas.

Educational context: storytelling

Like many Catalan schools, the primary school in which this project was first implemented had a history of using storybooks to promote positive attitudes to English; to ensure that the children's initial encounters with the language were fun and engaging; to provide opportunities for the children to hear the language in a 'natural' and authentic way; and to provide opportunities for them to hear different accents and to become familiar with the sounds of the language. While storybooks were already being used by the English teachers as one of the many resources available to them, the school also opted to start a Volunteer Project, enlisting the collaboration of parents and native speakers of the language to achieve the objectives stated above. Many other schools have already initiated similar projects and would therefore be well-placed to take the next step, which is described below.

Taking storytelling further

As one of the volunteer storytellers, the author of this study saw the huge potential provided by these storytelling sessions. Aware of the school's commitment to the *Impuls de la lectura* plan and the benefits brought about by the peer reading activities already carried out in L1 (*padrins i fillols*), she believed that storytelling in English could be exploited and developed further as a pedagogical tool to assist the language learning process and to help students progress from being

active and enthusiastic *listeners* to being equally enthusiastic *users* of the language. A proposal was drawn up for a *Storytelling Circle* project with the **key objectives** stated below:

- To promote a love of reading and stories
- To introduce and learn English in a meaningful way
- To improve active listening
- To develop oral communication in English
- To foster the learning to learn competence and acquisition of learning strategies in relation to foreign language learning

Main characteristics

The proposal was conceived as a cyclical project in which the students' role would develop, becoming progressively more active in the storytelling process. The interaction between students during small collaborative group work, as well as in the more challenging task of telling stories to younger learners, was seen as a crucial part of the process. The use of storybooks was considered to be an excellent way of stimulating meaningful learning of the language at all stages; from the earliest stages of initial input right up to, and in particular, during the final phase of the project when learners would be given a clear purpose: to understand a story (conceptually and linguistically) in order to tell it to their peers and to younger learners.

Systematic approach

A storytelling routine or format was designed to provide an approach which could be adopted and shared by the adult storytellers (teachers, volunteers), and which would also serve as a model to guide the older children and to provide the basis of the competency-based tasks they would carry out while preparing their storytelling session. The routine followed the format indicated below:

Table 1. Our Storytelling Circle Routine

1) Welcoming/greeting the listeners and creating a relaxed atmosphere
2) Introducing key vocabulary/expressions and/or grammatical structures needed to follow the story
3) Narrating the story encouraging maximum interaction among listeners
4) A game or activity related to the theme of the story
5) Closing the session and saying goodbye

From year 2 onwards, the routine is preceded and followed by oral and written tasks related to the theme of the story, carried out in English class time prior to and after the storytelling session, and collected together in a Storytelling Circle portfolio.

Organisation of storytelling sessions

The organisation of the sessions, and the main activities to be developed in them, was conceived in the following way:

Table 2. Our Storytelling Circle Cycle

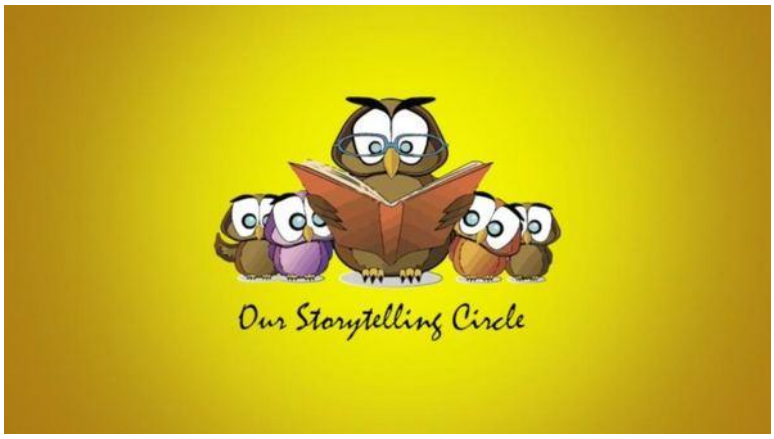
Year (of primary)	Main activities	Storytellers	Frequency
One	Listening to and interacting with storytelling sessions.	Volunteers*	At least once a term
Two	Listening to and interacting with storytelling sessions. Completing written tasks and beginning their Storytelling Circle Portfolio.		
Three & Four	Listening to and interacting with storytelling sessions. Completing written tasks and developing their Storytelling Circle Portfolio.	Year 6 students	At least once a term
Five (in small groups or pairs)	Preparing a storytelling session following the model provided and the sessions outlined in the Action Plan. Preparing worksheets to accompany the sessions. Rehearsing the story with year 6 students (peer assessment/feedback)		30/45-minute sessions once a fortnight during English class time** Sessions in the last term
Six (in small groups or pairs)	Preparing storytelling sessions following the model provided and the sessions outlined in the Action Plan. Preparing worksheets to accompany the sessions. Telling the stories to students of year 3 and 4.		30/45-minute sessions once a week during English class time** Once a term

** An opportunity exists here for developing a measure to aid the transition between educational stages by involving ex-students in the project as volunteers. This would require close coordination between primary and secondary centres, as alluded to in the Introduction to this paper, but it could have significant benefits for all participants.*

***The frequency and organisation of these sessions will change significantly when the cycle is properly up and running: i.e. students who have been exposed to the project from year one through to year four will be familiar with the format and will probably need less orientation than those without this experience. Nevertheless, adaptations can be made (as they were in this pilot study) to implement the cycle with students with no previous experience of the Storytelling Circle format.*

As we can see from the organisational table, the emphasis from year one to year four is on the development of active listening skills and the gradual development of story-related written tasks providing opportunities for building vocabulary, generating awareness of grammatical structures, and becoming familiar with the written form. Seeing their older peers as role models, year three and four students will come to realise that they, too, may become storytellers in the not-too-distant future. The design of the logo used throughout the project (used on worksheets, handouts, questionnaires, etc.) sought to highlight this aspirational element, representing it visually through the image of the little owls listening attentively to the wise old storyteller.

Figure 1. *Our Storytelling Circle* logo



Design and structure come together here to provide strategies aimed at creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation and interest, maintaining and protecting it, and finally encouraging positive self-evaluation in keeping with the process-oriented approach advocated by Dörnyei (2001) and discussed at a previous APAC convention by the author (Waddington & El Bakouri, 2016).

Selecting the storybooks

The recently updated edition of Ellis and Brewster's *Storytelling Handbook for Primary Teachers* (2014) provides an excellent guide for teachers wishing to use storybooks in the primary classroom, including a full chapter on selecting the right storybooks. This chapter (2) begins by discussing the growing interest shown in 'authentic' or 'real' storybooks, as opposed to graded readers, among EFL practitioners from the 1990s onwards. A case in question would be the use of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, 'quoted as being "an international superstar on the EFL front" (Rixon, 1992: 83), with children in nursery, primary and secondary school' (Ellis & Brewster, 2014, p. 14). The carefully planned use of this popular children's storybook by English teachers at all levels testifies to the pedagogical value of such books, and warns against undermining their motivational potential by placing too much emphasis on allegedly age-appropriate stories. In other words, the criticism that storybooks may be perceived as too childish or simplistic for older children would seem to hold little ground: it is not a question of *which* stories to use at *which* age, but a question of *how* we use them. However, as Ellis and Brewster insist, care does need to be taken 'to select storybooks that are accessible, useful and relevant for children learning English' (Ellis & Brewster, 2014, p. 14). Accessible, useful and relevant: three guiding principles which are then expanded upon throughout the chapter and supported by a systematic chart listing the Criteria

for selecting storybooks (see Ellis & Brewster, 2014, p. 19, Figure 5). After consulting this list, and bearing in mind the storybooks we had already worked with and found to be effective, we focused our selection, in particular, on 1) the accessibility of the language (avoiding excessive textual content); 2) the relevance of the vocabulary/expressions (relevance and interest for children, that is); 3) the possibility for interaction created by the narrative; 4) the presence of humour; 5) the positive messages/values conveyed by the story; 6) and finally, but not least, the visual appearance of the book, including the quality and appeal of its illustrations. A long list of potential storybooks was compiled from recommended titles, and by searching popular children's storybooks on various websites such as the following link http://www.realbooks.co.uk/selection.php.

Given the difficulties involved in accessing and viewing all these books, YouTube was found to be an excellent tool for sampling the copies, providing recorded versions of teachers, parents and even children reading many of the stories aloud. After sampling a large selection of storybooks, a list of 14 books that met our criteria was finally compiled and ordered through an online bookstore. The cost of this initial stock amounted to just under €100 and is expected to offer us plenty of scope for recycling and reusing over the next few years. We consider this to be a relevant point, considering the prohibitive costs of acquiring new material, which can sometimes prevent schools from implementing changes.

Creating a model

One of the storytelling sessions conducted with year 2 students in previous years (as part of the free/unsystematic volunteer project) was selected as a suitable session to be used as the model, given that it already followed the systematic format outlined above. The storybook in question was *Shark in the Park* by Nick Sharratt (2007), a story that employs a narrative device involving withheld images, or part of the image (i.e. showing a cat's ear but not her body, a bird's wing but not the body, etc.), to generate surprise at such a strange incongruity (a shark in a park?!) and create an aura of suspense which enthrals the listeners and draws them into the tale. A session plan was drawn up following the format described, and an audio-visual recording was made of the whole session. Subsequently, the recording was edited to create a version which could be used for teaching purposes: i.e. capturing and conveying all the different phases of the activity in a shorter timeframe. The edited version can be viewed at the following link: http://labranca.blogspot.com.es/.

Preparing a storytelling session

Competency-based activities: foreign language area

The recently published government steering documents on each disciplinary area – *Identificació i desplegament a l'educació primària* – aim to help teachers identify and develop the basic competences of this educational stage. As part of the collection on 'Language' (Direcció General d'Educació Infantil i Primària, 2015), the specific document on 'Foreign Languages' provides teachers with a detailed framework which begins by identifying five key dimensions:

Table 3. Dimensions of the Foreign Language Area

Foreign language basic competences **Dimensions**
Oral communication
Reading comprehension
Written expression
Literary
Plurilingual and intercultural

Each of these dimensions is then broken down into specific competences, giving us a total of 12 competences which students are expected to develop and attain within the foreign language area. By way of an example, Competence 1, within the dimension of Oral communication, refers to the ability to 'Obtain basic information and understand simple or graded oral texts related to everyday life, the media or school'. The full list of these 12 competences can be consulted in the steering document (Direcció General d'Educació Infantil i Primària, 2015, p. 9).

When planning how to help year 5 and 6 students devise their own storytelling sessions, it became clear that a wide range of competency-based activities would be needed to prepare the students for this task in a step-by-step manner. With the video model in hand, an Action Plan was drawn up to identify and organise the sequence of competency-based activities required. The original plan included thirteen different sessions of approximately 30-45 minutes. An abridged version of the first three sessions is provided below:

Table 4. Competency-based activities to prepare a storytelling session (Abridged version of first three sessions)

Description of Main Activities	Dimensions	SC	TC
Session 1. Watching model video. Identifying different phases of storytelling session. Practicing creating a relaxed atmosphere and using basic greetings (L2).	Oral communication Literary Plurilingual & intercultural	1 2 3 10 12	Learning to learn Social and civic Autonomy, PI & E
Session 2. Selecting a storybook. Reading for general meaning. Explaining general gist to others (L1 & L2).	Reading comprehension Oral communication Plurilingual and intercultural Literary	2 4 5 6 12 10	Learning to learn Social and civic Autonomy, PI & E
Session 3. Identifying key vocabulary and lexical sets. Translating into own language and creating a glossary (L1 & L2).	Reading comprehension Written expression Literary Plurilingual and intercultural	5 6 7 10 12	Learning to learn Digital Autonomy, PI & E

SC = Specific competences of foreign language area
TC = Transversal competences of primary curriculum

The Action Plan thus helped to organise the activities into a logical sequence, while also helping to identify the explicit aims of each activity (what exactly we wanted to do and why) and to determine how these aims corresponded to the different dimensions and specific competences established by the government steering document. Carrying out this cross-check helped us to see if any dimensions or specific competences were being neglected (which turned out not to be the case) and to identify the particular strengths of the programme. All five dimensions were given ample attention over the course of the different sessions, with the plurilingual and intercultural dimension standing out in particular. Within these dimensions, each of the twelve specific competences were worked on at some point during the programme: the majority of the competences were worked on at least three times; three competences (planning and producing oral texts, interpreting texts and understanding literary texts) were worked on more frequently, during five different sessions; followed by two competences (planning written texts, orally reproducing literary texts) which were worked on 6 times; one (using interactive oral strategies) which was worked on in 7 different sessions; and, finally, the competence involving the use of plurilingual strategies to communicate, which was worked on in almost all of the sessions planned.

Transversal competences

As well as identifying the different dimensions and specific competences to be worked on in the foreign language area, the new competency-based curriculum also places considerable emphasis on the attainment of the transversal competences considered to be vital for lifelong learning: digital; social and civic; learning to learn; autonomy, personal initiative and entrepreneurship. All four transversal competences are developed at length throughout the programme, with a particularly strong emphasis on activities that foster the **learning to learn** competence. This competence is considered vital in all contexts, but particularly in relation to foreign language learning, insofar as it helps to stimulate learners' self-awareness regarding the learning process and to promote more positive and realistic attitudes to language learning. The **digital** competence is also included and considered to be closely related to the learning to learn competence in any twenty-first century context: helping students learn to use digital technologies can help boost their language acquisition if used wisely and strategically, as in the activities requiring students to search online translation tools, for example. However, and as the steering document emphasises in the section on 'Plurilingual and intercultural competence', while translation can be a suitable resource in some specific cases, it should not be used as the central methodological approach to learn a language. Instead, priority should be given to the mechanisms deployed to acquire a first language in a natural context (Direcció General d'Educació Infantil i Primària, 2015, p. 101). The competency-based activities proposed here – set within a real, meaningful context and invested with a clear purpose – thus aim to provide mechanisms akin to those activated in first language acquisition.

As in the preschool storytelling methodology discussed at the outset of this paper (Artigal, 2005), considerable attention is also given to the interactive and dialogical nature of the activities and the final purpose of the programme (to tell a story in a way which engages the interest and interaction of the listeners), corresponding to the **social and civic** competence, which is fundamental in language learning contexts. Finally, providing students with a clear, instructional audio-visual model means that activities can be set up which provide students with clear visual, textual and linguistic guidelines, before inviting them to develop work **autonomously** (in small groups where the teacher monitors and guides), and to cultivate their own **initiative and entrepreneurship** in order to plan their own story-specific activities and storytelling sessions.

Competency-based assessment

Useful guidelines and ideas for assessing the competency-based activities proposed here can be found in the steering document referred to above (Direcció General d'Educació Infantil i Primària, 2015), in *The Storytelling Handbook* (Ellis & Brewster, 2014), and in the various documents available on the government website under the *Impuls de la lectura* programme. Most documents highlight the need to draw up assessment criteria related to the degree to which the specific competences are attained and to pay particular attention to attitudinal aspects, including attitudes to language learning and self-concept.

Our assessment strategy aims to cover these aspects using a combination of self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment strategies in order to monitor and assess the work carried out during the entire programme. In addition to the activity-related assessments, two instruments will be used over a longer period to assess long-term development on the one hand, and to observe specific aspects related to the learning to learn competence:

1) Our Storytelling Circle portfolio used to collect all worksheets and work related to the project
2) My Learning Diary in which year 5 and 6 students record (in L1 or L2) and reflect on their experiences during the sessions dedicated to preparing the storytelling session.

Initial conclusions

The project described in this paper is still in an experimental phase, and it is therefore difficult to draw conclusions at this stage. However, initial responses from the learners indicate that they are highly motivated to carry out all the preparatory work needed to be able to become effective storytellers. This work, as indicated above, involves tasks which develop all the specific competences of the foreign language curriculum. Moreover, an observation made by their English teacher reveals that 'they are learning lots of really useful grammar without even realising it'. This observation provides us with a valuable insight into what is occurring during this process. Teachers sometimes express regret that the joys of learning a foreign language that can be clearly witnessed during preschool and initial years of primary education gradually fade away, as the interactive forms of learning encouraged in early years are replaced by methodologies that often fail to maintain learners' interest. According to Siqués and Vila, one of the secrets behind the success of preschool ELT education is that English is taught in a way which bears more resemblance to the educational practices seen in the home than to those usually seen in formal school contexts (Siqués & Vila, 2014, p. 14): it is taught, in other words, in a way in which learners are unaware that they are learning. To what extent this form of learning can be compatible with, or even complementary to, the promotion of the learning to learn competence – which, by contrast, emphasises the need to develop metacognitive awareness – will be explored in future studies. One of the main aims of the proposal presented here is to foster an approach to ELT which will extend the successes seen in preschool contexts into the primary stage of education. Future reports on the progress made will reveal the extent to which this aim may be achieved.

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Biodata

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Back to the table of contents

clever pants productions
interactive theatre in 110% english
Very motivating! Good acting and excellent methodology. B. Rosal, BARCELONA
Brilliant! The best show for English learners I've ever seen. M. Pacheco, OLESA DE MONTSERRAT
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An Autistic Child Learning English as a Foreign Language

Eva Vigil Aran

Abstract

Learning languages is a complex phenomenon in which many aspects are related. It is even more difficult with a disability associated. The following paper is the result of an intrinsic case study for a master's thesis which aims at analysing how an autistic child learns English in a formal and informal way. It also looks at the aspects associated with autism which favour or hinder the process of acquisition of a foreign language. Moreover, it tries to investigate which are the best measures teachers of a foreign language can use to encourage the learning of English with an autistic child.

1. Introduction

The present situation of mainstream schools in Catalonia (Spain) is far different from that of thirty years ago. These days, there have been different changes not only in the curricular subjects, the pedagogical way of teaching but also in the condition of the diverse student body. Today, students are seen as participants in their learning and not only as receivers. Furthermore, they have abilities and necessities which have to be taken into account when teaching. Students and their different ways of learning are more present than ever. Therefore, being a teacher of foreign languages in mainstream schools in Catalonia requires abilities in different fields. Firstly, the foreign language (FL) teacher has to have a mastery of not onlythe language to teach but also of the didactics of how to teach it. Secondly, the teacher has to be able to face a multiple reality of types of learning with an additional challenge in comparison with some other subjects: the lack of or very little command of the FL language on the part of the students.

In this multi-universe of learning, one has to consider the children with special educational needs, those children who have difficulties in following course content due to their disabilities or severe conduct disorders. In this huge group of special education needs, one distinguishes the children with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The teacher of English as a foreign language needs to cope with a totally new situation.

The two educational laws which represent a big difference for the special education needs children in Spain are the Organic Law on the General Education System (LOGSE 1990) and the Organic Education Law (LOE 2/2006, 3rd May). The former, in Title 1, Chapter V, Article 36, mentions the integration of these children into mainstream schools whenever possible. The necessary adaptations in the curriculum must be created to fulfil the educational goals. Since then, those standards have been a constant in the subsequent education laws. However, the latter, the LOE, in Title II, Chapter I, Section I, Article 74, differs from the previous one by replacing the term *integration* with *inclusion*, which is a broader term. The term *inclusion* focuses on both the conditions and the operational system of the school. In broader terms, as Rosa Blanco mentions in her article "Hacia una escuela para todos y con todos" (as cited in the web page "Educación Inclusiva" (Pastor, et al., n.d), integration makes more reference to the adjustment of the materials instead of the necessities of the children. In contrast, inclusion focuses on the transformation of the curriculum and the way of teaching. In this same sense, McColl (2005, p. 103) reports that "since 'integration' became 'inclusion' educators have been trying to ensure no child is denied access to the full curriculum", which "includes (...) access to foreign language learning".

Inclusion understands diversity as normal. Education has to value and respect differences to foster social and personal development. Since the LOE, special education children are understood as the ones who require supports or specific education attention due to their disability or severe conduct disorders. The importance of this law regarding special needs is that it mentions principles of normalization and inclusion of those children. It emphasizes that those special children will be schooled in special education centres only if their needs cannot be addressed within the framework of the measures of attention to diversity in mainstream schools. From then on, the mainstream schools present a kind of diversity in their student body not experienced before. So, the professionals working in education have to adapt to this new state of different styles of learning, adjusting their curriculums to the necessities and abilities of each child. The entity of present-day classrooms is quite diverse, and it is quite common to find special education needs children like ASD ones in most mainstream classrooms.

2. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

2.1 Autism and its affections regarding language and communication

According to the National Autistic Society (n.d.), "[a]utism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them." It is the result of a neurological disorder, and it affects the development of communication and social interaction skills. The condition emerges between birth and three years of age (Medical News Today, 2016). The initial study of autism began around 1943 with the description by Leo Kanner and later on with the one by Hans Asperger in 1944. Those descriptions have been broadened with data from empirical investigations to obtain the concept that exists today. However, it was not until the 70's that Rutter and his collaborators established the basic criteria for the diagnosis of autism. These criteria have become the basis for the current definition of autism. Then in the 90's, an interprofessional consensus on the definition of the disorder was reached (Martos Pérez, 2000, p. 18). Presently, as reported in the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5™) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), the term autism includes previously separate disorders under a single condition. ASD includes the autistic disorder (autism) which ranges from mute and profoundly retarded to highly gifted and intelligent individuals; Asperger's disorder; childhood disintegrative disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified under a single condition (Sigman and Capps, 1997 quoted in Kremer-Sadlik, 2005). All these disorders are characterized by deficits in social communication and interaction; restricted repetitive behaviours, interests, and activities.

Although the purpose of this study is not to present an in-depth exploration of ASD, it is important to highlight those characteristics which are directly related to language and communication. Carpenter's (2013) adaptation of the categorization of behaviours related to DSM-5 criteria provides the following classification: a) ASD children present persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across contexts, not accounted for by general developmental delays and manifest three symptoms: deficits in social-emotional reciprocity; deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviours used for social interaction; deficits in developing and maintaining relationships appropriate to developmental level beyond those with caregivers. b) ASD children present restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interest or activities manifested by at least two out of four symptoms: stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects; excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behaviour, or excessive

resistance to change; highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus; hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment.

As far as language is concerned, Monsalve (2002, p. 72) states that people with Asperger syndrome or Highly Functional ASD, with no other factors associated, acquire the morphological, phonological, syntactic and grammatical components properly. Nonetheless, they might omit certain morphemes, present certain difficulties with verb suffixes and their grammar resources might be limited. Moreover, according to González Carbajal (2002, p. 87 f), ASD individuals present difficulties in the semantic aspects of discourse, pragmatic aspects, and prosody (tone, accent, rhythm). González Carbajal goes on to highlight that ASD children violate Grice's maxims of relevance and quantity and, therefore, the principle of cooperation, hindering an efficient conversation (González Carbajal, 2002, p. 90). Moreover, high function autism (HFA) and Asperger children tend to make a literal interpretation of what is said. So, indirect speech acts impede communication for them, according to González Carbajal. Last but not least, one of the characteristics of autistic children is that their thinking is mainly visual, and this applies to language as well. The visual information they receive is of utmost importance, more so than the words themselves. They are very literal and have trouble understanding metaphorical language. We tend to use a lot of words and express the same thing in different ways; this is very difficult for ASD people to understand. They need brief, clear information. Their particular way of tackling language leads ASD children to comprehend the whole before analysing the parts (González Carbajal, 2002, 91).

2.2 Autism and bilingual or multilingual children

The most recent literature about second language acquisition in ASD individuals deals mainly with bilingual autistic children from multilingual, minority-language communities living in the USA. The parents of ASD children looked for professional advice on how to deal with their multilingual condition as regarded their ASD child. Clinical and speech therapist professionals' guidance has not always been consistent with empirical research findings. In her study, Kremer-Sadlik (2005) presents clinicians' recommendations to parents of high functioning autistic (HFA) children whose native language is other than English. Kremer-Sadlik shows how those professionals are in favour of exposing the HFA child to the same language inside and outside the home to simplify the linguistic input they receive in order to facilitate language learning and use (2005, p. 1225). Valls Lanàquena and Suay Lerma (2014) also refer to the same warnings by some professionals in the fields of education and health who advise against bilingual education for children with ASD. The idea that underlies this is that "a second language would work as a mask which retards the development of the first language and this effect would be multiplied in individuals with ASD" (Valls Lanàquena and Suay Lerma, 2014, p. 87). According to Kremer-Sadlik (2005, p. 1226), clinicians' recommendations that multilingual families speak one language to their HFA children might be based on Cummins' Threshold and Cognitive Development Interdependence Hypothesis. This hypothesis states that "when first language (L1) skills are impaired or underdeveloped, limits are set in turn on second language (L2) development, that is, a child whose language is delayed in his L1 is unlikely to succeed in his L2, low levels of L1 and L2 increase the child's risk of enduring negative cognitive effects" (Cummins 1979, cited in Kremer-Sadlik, 2005, 1226). Yet, Cummins defended strengthening the L1 to create a solid base on which to develop an L2. The clinicians that are discussed in Kremer-Sadlik's article seemed to have misunderstood Cummins' original idea, by recommending the acquisition of an L2 in a way that is tantamount to replacing the child's L1 with it, in order to avoid any harmful effects of having to learn to two different languages. In fact, most recent research in bilingualism with ASD children

in the USA seems to show that bilingualism does not have negative consequences, as shown in the following studies.

Hambly and Fombonne (2011) worked with families of 75 children with ASD from Canada living in different language environments such as French, English, Chinese, Farsi, Hebrew, Italian, Romanian, Spanish or Tamil. Their conclusions showed that bilingual exposure in infancy or post-infancy in ASD children had no impact on their abilities in the dominant language.

Ohashi et al. (2012) compared the early language abilities of 40 autistic, monolingual-exposed, young children to autistic, bilingual-exposed children whose languages were Japanese, French, Urdu or Spanish. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between bilinguall-exposed and monolingual-exposed children regarding the age of first words and the age of first phrases. Besides, they also found that there were no differences between both groups as regarded communication impairments, receptive language, expressive language and functional communication abilities, suggesting that early bilingual language exposure does not add an additional burden to the developing language system of young children with ASD.

Petersen, Marinova-Todd and Mirenda (2012) studied the lexical comprehension and production and overall language skills of 14 English-Chinese bilingual and 14 English monolingual children with ASD. The results reflected that bilingual English-Chinese preschool-age children with ASD have the capacity to function successfully as bilinguals.

Valicenti et al. (2012) compared the expressive and receptive language skills of 40 monolingual English toddlers and 40 bilingual English-Spanish toddlers with ASD. The results presented no differences in cognitive functioning and autistic features between both groups. Additionally, ASD bilingual toddlers, compared to their monolingual counterparts, were more likely to vocalize and utilize gestures with no other differences in language skills. So, the researchers conclude that bilingualism did not negatively affect language development in young children with ASD.

Bird, Lamond and Holden (2012) carried out a survey study among 49 parents or guardians of children with ASD who were members of a bilingual family. Seventy-five percent of them were raising their child with ASD to be bilingual or multilingual in spite of professional recommendations to the contrary. The results observed were that children with ASD exposed to two languages were often reported to be acquiring the two languages of exposure, although the degree of attainment in both languages was different.

Vulchanova, Talcott, Vulchanov and Stankova (2012) reported how a 10-year-old Bulgarian girl with Asperger's syndrome learnt German as an L2 mainly from watching children's programmes on a German TV channel. The researchers argued that different factors came together. The girl's narrow and restricted interests, in conjunction with good auditory skills, good working memory and extensive practise might have been the reasons for early language acquisition.

Smith, Tsimpli and Ouhalla (1993) described the case of a 31-year-old polyglot *savant* called Christopher. The rough outline presented in the article shows huge differences in his abilities regarding non-verbal IQ, his mental maturity, his verbal IQ, his reading and his vocabulary. Yet, he has an exceptional aptitude for learning and translating languages. In the study, Christopher was taught two languages: Berber, an Afro-Asiatic one, and Epun, a language invented by the researchers. This study tried to prove that L2 acquisition is the combined result of the effects of transfer from the L1 and principles of UG.

2.3 Teaching a second language to ASD children

The literature regarding teaching a second language to autistic children is not broad at all. So, teachers of English as a second language have to face a reality and a professional challenge without much on which to sustain their pedagogical decisions.

Sparks (2006) commented on the present tendency to talk about a foreign language learning disability (FLLD). This is diagnosed to be eligible for course substitutions at university. Both educators and aptitude test developers suggest there is a connection between a learning disability (LD) and a foreign language (FL), with the former being a cause of FLLD. This hypothesis is based on using IQ as the prime criterion for classifying students as LD ones and determining special education services for them. However, those tests have not been an effective predictor of FL proficiency. Some others have used the MLAT (Modern Language Aptitude Test) to show the correlation between FL aptitude and FL proficiency, indicating that there should be a relationship between their FL aptitude and their IQ score. Some supporters of the idea of FLLD also propose using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) to diagnose a "disability" for FL learning.

However, Sparks discounts the previous assertions and argues that there is no "empirical evidence to support a distinct 'disability' for FL learning" (Sparks, 2006, 552). Firstly, he notes that some studies have shown no differences on a cognitive and academic level between LD students enrolled in FL courses compared to poor FL learners not diagnosed with LD. Secondly, he says that there does not seem to be a consensus among FL researchers regarding the reasons why some students present problems in FL learning. Cognitive variables (language aptitude, native language skills) and affective variables (anxiety, motivation, and personality) are noted as possible FL learning advantages or disadvantages. Thirdly, Sparks suggests that there might be other important variables in achieving FL success, such as effort, motivation, and persistence, among others. Fourthly, using DSM is not a reliable tool for identifying a FL disability, either, because, to meet the DSM criteria for disability, the impairment must be substantial; there must be an absolute deficit and not a relative performance. In their words, the "impairment must substantially limit a major life activity". Fifthly, the MLAT is not a good instrument for diagnosing an FLLD, because it is an aptitude test not an achievement (proficiency) test, and, as was said before, there are many other variables to take into account when learning FLs. Moreover, MLAT norms are outdated because today's society is different from the one that the MLAT norms correlated well with.

Arries (1999) also observed the growing number of cases of LD students enrolling in universities. He commented on how those learners find it difficult to follow traditional FL courses. He concurred with Sparks in that there is no agreement on a single method which has been proved effective in teaching a FL to students with LD. Arries (1999) lists specific strategies which have been verified as addressing some of the LD students' needs in their learning of a FL. He also proposed an approach to redesign traditional FL programs to better adapt them to the LD learners' needs.

The following strategies are the result of Arries' interviews (1999) with LD students in the university and, additionally, how they have been shown to help the LD students in their goal of learning an FL. Most of them are based on Dunn's student-centred learning approach rather than the teacher-centred, traditional one (Dunn, 1995, cited in Arries, 1999). First of all, Arries proposed creating a mnemonic, colour-phonics system to enhance pronunciation, to improve listening comprehension and to help them in their oral reading assignments. Secondly, it is quite important to use a lot of visual support both with images and colour-coded subtitles to facilitate memory of vocabulary and pronunciation. Arries suggested using Goutin's series of kinaesthetic

exercises to help those students with FL grammar. Thirdly, it is crucial to reduce anxiety for those LD students because "anxiety is a key factor in the success of students with disabilities". Last but not least, he suggested reducing distractions as a way to reduce anxiety.

Arries' course design consists of inclusive language courses to accommodate LD students and meet the needs of all the students. This model consists of a group of special education professionals working together with the FL teacher to discuss class arrangements, modifications to the curriculum, aids and services which are best to assist and include LD students in the regular classroom (Arries, 1999, p. 103).

Some other studies deal directly with autism and the teaching of foreign language using successful strategies to teach ASD children. Yahya, Yunus and Toran (2013) carried out a qualitative research project using a case study design regarding instructional practices in teaching sight vocabulary to ASD children in a natural setting. The researchers found that the teachers used the L1 for instructions, as the use of the L2 was difficult for ASD kids to understand. The teachers also adjusted the sight vocabulary to the level of the ASD students, as the L2 was used for instructions. In addition, the ASD children were given the same opportunities to participate in class as their non-disabled classmates. In conclusion, all these practices promoted the acquisition of sight vocabulary by ESL students with autism.

Vivienne Wire (2005) provided strategies from her experience that have proved to be effective when teaching a foreign language to high functioning and Asperger children. Wire recommended using the lack of flexibility and the predisposition for routines and repetitions characteristic of these children to teach them the basic ground language. They are willing to learn daily greetings and conversations, instructions with visual support, classroom rules and so on. This kind of language will be a great help for learning more challenging language for social interactions later on. As Wire commented, social interactions are basic in foreign language classrooms, and those are the best moments for ASD children to interact and connect with the rest of their classmates. ASD children have some trouble following lots of verbal instructions, so Wire advised using lots of visual prompts and avoiding multiple instructions. Wire (2005) also recommended making some small concessions to ASD children, as they have more trouble dealing with transitions from one class to another or from one subject to another.

Last but not least, several researchers have highlighted the role of motivation, as Wire (2005) mentioned, as an important factor to take into account when working with ASD children. For instance, Wire (2005) stated that Gardener and Lambert (1972) "have noted that in acquiring a second language motivation plays as important a part as aptitude". Most ASD children have one subject of interest. Therefore, it is important to use it as a vehicle for teaching them the L2. It is crucial to involve them actively in their learning process. Koegel and Egel (1979) proved in their research that one of the characteristics of ASD children is the lack of motivation when completing learning tasks. So it is of relevance to take this important variable into account when working with them. Koegel and Egel's study showed an improvement in correct responses in task completion and an increase in motivation in ASD children through increasing the children's rewards. The results showed that apart from each child's characteristics, the responses to tasks were above the pre-treatment level. Regarding motivation, the results showed that enthusiasm increased and disruptive behaviour decreased. In subsequent studies, Koegel, Singh and Koegel (2010) presented positive results when incorporating motivational components into academic tasks, which led to faster completion rates, decreasing disruptive behaviour, typical of ASD children, and improved interest when working with ASD children. Dunlap and Koegel (1980) carried out a study where they evaluated the effects of two methods used with ASD children under a constant task condition versus a varied task one. Results showed that children were more enthusiastic, interested, happier

and better behaved during the varied task session. To sum up, those researchers exhibited the need to control for the variable of boredom when using tasks with ASD children.

3 Conclusion

In conclusion, most of the studies showed that teaching a foreign language to ASD children is beneficial. It not only contributes to developing their autonomy but also develops their social skills, two outcomes which are of utmost importance for ASD children. Furthermore, McColl (2005) states that even though not all language learners will become competent in the language, the benefits go beyond communicative competence because learning an FL gives special-education-needs children cultural knowledge, personal and social development, and a sense of belonging to a community.

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Biodata

Eva Vigil Aran is a teacher in Vora del Mar school located in Cubelles. It is a standard school with a special education support class (USEE). Eva Vigil has been working as an English teacher in primary schools for 15 years and for 6 with autistic children learning English in regular classes. She holds a master's degree in Applied Linguistics and Acquisition of Languages in Multilingual Contexts from the University of Barcelona. Her master's thesis is based on a case-study with an autistic student from the school she works in. She also holds a bachelor's degree in English Studies from the University of Barcelona.

Back to the table of contents

Nutri Fit Cruise

Fina Vendrell Vila

Mens sana in corpore sano. (Yuvenal)

Abstract

This article describes an eTwinning project carried out in three participating countries: Catalonia, Greece and Poland. A ship sails across the "eTwinning sea" and stops at several different islands. There we learn about how to keep our minds and bodies healthy. This project is a practical example of a cross-curricular, interdisciplinary project, the methodology of which involves the development of key competences and can be characterized as innovative, collaborative, cross-curricular, project-based and motivational. This methodology was supported by ICT and had a focus on student-centred, personalized learning. The project was a good way to involve students and motivate them through learning by doing. It also demonstrated that we can work well by opening our school doors and letting Europe into the classroom!

Introduction

Crew members from three different countries lived aboard the Nutri Fit ship as a big family. People with different languages, traditions and cultures lived together and shared the same goals of just having fun and learning a lot at the same time. All the activities were developed in a cooperative and collaborative way, and in the adventure students improved their English and used lots of new web 2.0 tools.

Curricula integration, innovation and creativity

The subject and the aim of the project were closely connected with the school curriculum and the education program. Pupils improved their English level, especially their communication skills in it because this language was used as the main language for their international communication. The children also developed their ICT abilities while working on new programs and using modern ICT tools. They could expand their talents in writing recipes and books, cooking, acting or taking part in advertisements. The children demonstrated their huge creativity in painting, drawing and making works of art during Arts and Crafts lessons. Music lessons helped them to sing the anthem. They appreciated the role of physical exercises during PE lessons. The children's awareness of the nutritional importance of fruit and vegetables and the significant role of bees increased their Science knowledge.

The topic of this interdisciplinary project combined education and educational aims in a very appealing way. All the activities were focussed on healthy habits. The students learnt how to lead a healthy life and do physical exercise regularly. The project taught the children tolerance towards people from other countries and supported their respect for the elderly. Cooperation with parents and the local community is also included in the school's educational role. To summarize, NFC was a multidisciplinary project, where different multiple intelligences and key competences were developed and improved throughout it.

Communication, collaboration and exchange between partner schools

Positive cooperation, mutual help and the exchange of experiences enabled the teachers to overcome problems connected with using modern communication and information technologies. Pupils cooperated and shared experiences very willingly. The exchange of views in a foreign language by using chats, video conferences through *Adobe Connect*, email and forums was a new experience for some of them. Conducted video conferences are an example of direct communication between children. Writing a simultaneous story and performing it, writing lyrics for the anthem using *Meetingwords* and singing it all together, or contributing to the transnational *Padlets* are also good examples of sharing their cooperative work.

None of the activities could have been carried out without the collaboration and the involvement of the three countries. Most of the collaborative activity results had a tangible outcome: a play, an e-book, a common anthem, dynamic meals, etc.

Use of technology

New ways of thinking, working, and living in the world are moulding the framework of our 21st century. Technologies are changing our way of learning, and they allow us to work collaboratively and develop our skills and competences. So, our thinking in this project was, "Let's take advantage of them!"

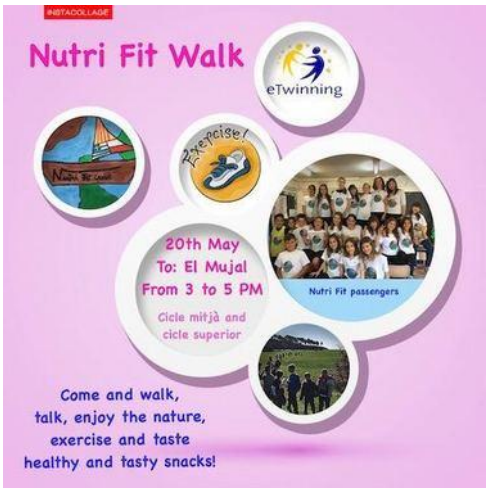
The use of web tools in the project was consistent in all the phases to ensure success and the attainment of pedagogical objectives. It's amazing how rewarding it is for all of us to use new web2.0 tools. Pupils had a challenge: to develop their knowledge and abilities by using modern information technology. They were willing to learn new tools to present their material on *Twinspace*. Some of them were able to communicate in a foreign language through *eTwinning Live* and *Twinspace* for the first time. They also learnt how to use many tools in a clever and creative way such as: *Padlet*, *Storyjumper*, *Smilebox*, *Kizoa*, *Kahoot*, *Wordle*, *AnswerGarden*, *Calaméo* (*eSafety* issues were taken into account, as well as copyright issues), *Prezi*, *Picture Trail*, PowerPoint, video conferencing through *Adobe Connect*, *vokis*, blogging, *Google Docs*, *Studio Audacity*, *Freepuzzlemaker*, *HotPotatoes*, *TitanPad*, *Babblerize*, *VideoScribe*, *Tagxedo*, and the interactive whiteboard. The variety and large amount of web tools used in this project were interesting and attractive. All of them are uploaded on a *Symbaloo page on Twinspace* in order to be public and shared by anyone who needs them.

The teachers in the three countries learnt from one another, as did the pupils. Our cooperative way of working helped us to improve our teaching skills a lot!

Results, impact and documentation

The project raised pupils' awareness that people of different nationalities and cultures also want to lead a healthy lifestyle, and they live next to us: different people - the same desires. The teachers managed to create the final effect (a Nutri Fit Walk) based on the participation of students, teachers and parents, which allows one to consider the approach to this subject in a holistic way. The project is an example of an innovative way of teaching English. It activated pupils and motivated them, and it developed their industriousness and creative thinking.

All the activities in our project are appropriate for any school, any place and any language. The project's impact was important, given the fact that it went beyond the school gates and reached all the families in the community through communication via the web, the school's blog and the town media.



Nutri fit walk
Just perfect!

MAY 20,2016

Awards

Nutri Fit Cruise won numerous *awards*. It received three National Quality labels: from Spain, Greece and Poland. It was also given a European Quality label. In addition, it won the 1st National eTwinning prize in the 11th National Competition in Greece, in October 2016, along with the 1st National Prize in Poland. The three teachers coordinating the project, Angeliki Kougiourouki in Greece, Irena Glowinska in Poland, and myself, enjoyed ourselves immensely and learnt a great deal from each other. Participating in eTwinning allows teachers and students from all over Europe to find a way to work as a great team, to get involved and motivated, while we all become more creative and gain more positive values towards society and the world.

Conclusion

"Nutri Fit Cruise" allowed teachers and students to embark on a shared journey, form huge friendships among ourselves, improve our English a lot, and learn how to use many new web 2.0 tools. What's more, like Henry Ford once said: "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success". Our great success is here, having reached the end with a huge smile! Thanks to eTwinning, to our pupils and teachers, and also to our parents, we are more open-minded today!

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Twinspace of the eTwinning project: *https://twinspace.etwinning.net/10116/home*

Biodata

Fina Vendrell Vila has been an English teacher in Col·legi Sant Josep, in Navàs, for more than 25 years. She has been a European eTwinning ambassador since 2013, and her projects have won numerous awards: one National prize and two European eTwinning prizes for the projects "Golden Rules of Good Behaviour" and "Powerfulnaturekingdom.et"; European Quality Labels for the projects "eTwinning Tree" and "Nutri Fit Cruise"; and several John McDowell awards from APAC and the British Council. She is the author of *Quaderns CLIL* for primary schools, published by Cruïlla. She is currently involved in several eTwinning projects and also Erasmus+.

Back to the table of contents

EAP: A Challenge for Teachers and Learners

Annabel Fernández

Fiona Parker

Abstract

This article explores the growth of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in European universities. EMI has facilitated the global dissemination of ideas and research across countries. In order for this to be possible, students and academics have to be able to communicate effectively through a shared understanding of the use of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). EAP teachers are deemed essential to train university students to study through EMI in non-English-speaking countries. EMI programmes in Catalan universities are on the rise, and the various pedagogical implications associated with their implementation must be taken into consideration. EAP clearly has a major role to play.

The growth of English as an international academic language

English is omnipresent in the domain of research, becoming the default lingua franca at international conferences and in research studies, especially in the natural sciences, which are almost exclusively published in English, even when neither the authors nor publishers are based in English-speaking countries (Graddol, 2006). Universities are becoming increasingly internationalized and English is used as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in universities worldwide, particularly in Europe. English as a Medium of Instruction is defined as, 'The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English', in a recent report published by EMI Oxford and the British Council (Dearden, 2014, p. 4).

The current internationalisation of European higher education responds to the new demands of the 21st-century knowledge-based society, and to the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), referred to as 'the Bologna process' (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The Bologna Declaration (European Higher Education Area, 1999) led to a European framework whereby member countries agreed to harmonize degree cycles at the undergraduate and graduate levels (bachelor, master, doctorate), recognize equivalences among qualifications, implement a common system of credits, harmonize quality assurance systems, be more responsive to the labour market, and promote mobility of students and staff. Enhancing student mobility was considered a critical component in the creation of the resulting EHEA, leading to an increase in mobility for lecturers and students alike.

The rapid growth in the number of courses offered in English across a range of disciplines has been documented in the three survey studies which the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) devoted to the theme of English-medium instruction in Europe (Maiworm and Wächter, 2002; Wächter and Maiworm, 2008 and 2014). The surveys found that the two most frequently stated reasons for this increase are student-orientated, removing language obstacles for the enrolment of foreign students and also to improve the international competences, as in students' ability to interact in a global setting. Another important motive is the possible contribution of EMI to raising the international profile of the institution, not only for fostering partnerships with institutions from

other countries, but also for sharpening their profile in comparison with other institutions in their own country.

The implementation of EMI has various pedagogical implications: the adequacy of the teachers' linguistic competences to deliver courses in English; the students' understanding of the content in English; or the possible detrimental effect of English-medium instruction on the level of the programmes (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2011). When EMI became a matter of academic attention in non-English-speaking European countries at the beginning of this century, a highly controversial debate was sparked. It concentrated on the quality of learning, which critics maintained was in danger, and concerns were raised that the classroom reality of EMI programmes was marred by teachers who could not properly express themselves in English and students who were unable to fully understand the English language content. This is particularly so when EMI is imposed by higher education institutions without adequately addressing the professional development needs of subject lecturers in English and with insufficient consideration of how to support bilingual and instructional strategies (Block, 2016).

Some Catalan universities have opted to adopt EMI, and degree subjects are taught in English; bilingual degrees have emerged, and Masters programmes are also offered in English. A report published in 2015 by Research and Universities, Secretaria d'Universitats i Recerca, shows a slow increase in the courses taught in L3 (mostly English) both in degree programmes and Masters, but numbers are relatively low.

EMI at university level clearly places greater demands and challenges on language as a constructor of knowledge and, although there is little research in the field, seems to have undesirable effects on content learning in certain settings. If the road of EMI is taken, careful consideration and planning need to unfold from a pedagogical perspective.

Towards a definition of EAP

The growth of English as the leading language for the dissemination of academic knowledge has transformed higher education worldwide. The response of the language teaching profession to these demands has been the development of a new field in TEFL in universities and other academic settings: the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

English Language Teaching (ELT) consists of two distinct branches: English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). ESP is defined as an activity seeking to meet the specific needs of learners by making use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) are subdivisions of ESP. The term English for Academic Purposes, as defined by Hyland and Shaw (2016), covers language and research instruction that focuses on the communicative needs and practices of individuals working in academic contexts and has the English language at its heart. However, as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu commented, no one is a native speaker of academic language. Academic language is a social practice and it must be learned by observation, study and experiment (Bourdieu, Passeron and de Saint Martin, 1994). Therefore, EAP teachers and students alike need specialized training in order to become competent in academic English.

In the first issue of the Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP), EAP was defined quite simply as 'teaching English with the aim of facilitating learners' study or research in that language' (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001, p. 8; Jordan 1997, p.1, cited in Hyland and Hamp-

Lyons, 2002, p. 2). EAP, which concerns particular groups of learners in a highly specified context with a far more restricted focus than EGP, has given rise to two further sub-sectors: English for general academic purposes (EGAP) and English for specific academic purposes (ESAP). ESAP can cover a variety of types of English for specific academic purposes, such as English for law, architecture or nursing (de Chazal, 2014).

Upon entering university, students must quickly become proficient in the production and comprehension of academic discourse to be successful in their studies. Hence EAP aims to provide students with key academic skills, language, and competences in order to communicate effectively in English in an academic setting.

Academic texts express a great deal of conceptual information concisely, using a greater number of complex noun phrases, which are particularly difficult for non-native students to decipher. In EAP, reading and analysis are intertwined, and the development of critical awareness is fundamental. Critical readers have to deal with: consideration of place and date of publication; identifying author bias and purpose; evaluating the scope of the research; distinguishing fact from opinion; comparing the author's argument to other points of view and to the reader's own experience and knowledge; ultimately evaluating the strength of the argument and validity of the text with the goal of writing a critical response in order to synthesise ideas and opinions in a new piece of academic writing.

Writing is widely seen as a fundamental skill in EAP teaching and learning; according to Bruce (2011, p.10), 'writing tends to be regarded as the core skill in EAP courses'. The main means through which students can demonstrate their academic credentials is writing which shows evidence of in-depth exploration of specific questions or topics, the effective use of sources and data to support claims, and the ability to imagine a questioning reader. Writing depends on reading as a stimulus for ideas, and as a source of information about the expectations of a range of academic texts by analysing their organization and the way that ideas flow from one sentence to another (Alexander, Argent and Spencer, 2008).

A core academic skill linked with reading for writing is the use of secondary research and referencing source material. This includes: finding relevant sources; evaluating these sources; distinguishing fact from opinion, and identifying bias. Taking responsibility for the inclusion of these sources is shown by accurate citation and referencing. The process of selecting texts begins with identifying key terms which can be used to conduct an internet or library catalogue search of books with relevant titles or sub-titles. Having found a source text, students need to reduce the volume of reading by pinpointing the specific page or pages where relevant information can be found, using the contents page and/or index and checking the relevance of the text to their topic as background information, specific details or examples.

Another core skill is the comprehension of academic spoken English, such as that found in lectures. Participants in academic contexts need good listening skills to function effectively, as much of what they have to understand and learn is conveyed in lectures. Rodgers and Webb (in Hyland and Shaw, 2016), state that in order for students to comprehend a lecture, they must invoke general listening comprehension skills from linguistic or non-linguistic knowledge sources. Successful academic listening is linked to students' ability to identify relationships between elements of lecture discourse such as: signpost words, repetitions and deviations, to enable them to take down the main points of the lecture. Students need to record the information presented in a lecture in note form; therefore, producing clear notes is also an important element in EAP listening strategies.

Listening actively to colleagues in seminar groups in order to respond effectively is an important element of EAP speaking skills. Academic speaking activities include: participating in whole-class discussions, delivering oral presentations, and seminar discussions. Preparation for seminars involves researching by reading or listening to relevant texts in order to share information and critically appraise different stances. In these discussions, speakers need to be persuasive but demonstrate flexibility by attempting to reach an agreement through cooperative interaction.

While dialogic speech is essential in seminars, in order to give an effective presentation, students need monologic speech skills. In presentations, both content and delivery are important. Comprehensibility is a vital element, and can be achieved through mastery of the pronunciation of the key terms in the presentation and the correct use of discourse markers to make the structure clear to the audience. Delivery skills also involve pace, timing, body language, clarifying and backtracking when necessary.

The principle of approaching information critically is central to academic practice in the English academic culture and EAP. Traditionally, it is thought of as an abstract process which requires a sceptical state of mind in approaching texts and their ideas. The ability to critically evaluate texts in order to use the information in a new way is high on the cognitive learning skills pyramid developed by a team of educational experts, led by the educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom, in 1956. Bloom's taxonomy presents a helpful tool to map and classify aspects of knowledge. Three educational domains were identified in The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: the affective domain, highlighting the need for educators to engage the students in the learning process; the psychomotor domain, which involves the rote learning of a specific sequence of steps to achieve a task; finally, the cognitive domain, which focuses on the development of intellectual abilities and skills (Bloom, 1956, pp. 20-24).

Anderson and Krathwohl revised the taxonomy in 2001. The change from nouns to verbs is designed to facilitate the implementation of the taxonomy by teachers. Syllabuses can be designed to work through the different levels of cognitive skills, from the LOTS (lower-order thinking skills) to the HOTS (higher-order thinking skills). The 'synthesis' section of Bloom's original taxonomy becomes 'create' in the revised taxonomy. The ultimate objective can be seen as synthesising old ideas and knowledge to create new ideas and knowledge.

In order to use higher- and lower-level skills in writing tasks, essay titles can use words like 'describe' or 'list' to use the skill of remembering, or 'explain causes and effects' to demonstrate understanding. The application of this information can be used in problem-solution essays whilst evaluation can be demonstrated in essays with titles which include words such as 'assess' or 'differentiate', whereas analysis is necessary in a 'compare and contrast' essay. The creation of new material by combining (or synthesising) old ideas can put forward new theories, whilst solutions can be developed with titles such as 'suggest improvements.' Being aware of the purposes of a writing task and the skills being tested can help the students to understand their reading/writing purpose and prioritise the higher-level thinking skills in their response. Similarly, a combination of tasks in an essay title, for example: 'define, assess and suggest' can integrate the skills of remembering and understanding with evaluation and creation.

The EAP practitioner

The rapid expansion and provision of EAP courses has been accompanied by an increase in demand for EAP practitioners. The first categorization of the competences required of EAP

teachers as well as EAP teacher education was made in 2008 by the British Association of Lecturers of English as an Academic Language (BALEAP), a UK-based professional association which supports the development of EAP practitioners.

The BALEAP framework maps out the core teaching competences, skills and capabilities, which are designed to translate into effective teacher training and student learning. The Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes (CFTEAP) is useful for anybody considering moving into EAP practice and aims to reflect 'best practice' and raise the profile of the profession (BALEAP, 2008, 2011, 2014). The following paragraphs are aimed at summarising the key competencies and their implications for practitioners and students.

The overall competency statement highlights the need for EAP practitioners to have knowledge of higher education organisation and policies within different disciplines, an ability to facilitate the acquisition of language skills and strategies necessary for students, and an understanding of students' previous learning experiences. It also stresses the need for students to be able to engage in critical thinking and the ability to work effectively in groups or independently.

This should be reflected in the design of educational programmes which test the ability to classify texts according to their rhetorical function and relate teaching methods to academic tasks for formative and summative assessments. Therefore, teachers need to be fully aware of university norms and conventions in order to help students with writing and speaking tasks that mirror the practices they will encounter on their courses. There is an emphasis on evidence-based reasoning supported by correct citation and reference.

In order to help students become proficient in academic discourse, teachers need to have knowledge of 'sub-technical vocabulary' such as cohesion and coherence, semantics and pragmatics, grammar and syntax, and text types, which enables them to understand texts without having specialist knowledge. This ability to go beyond sentence-level analysis should lead to detailed feedback on a student's work.

The framework also encourages teachers to engage actively in continuing professional development, and communicate new ideas to colleagues through action research, conference presentations and published articles, reflecting critically on their own practice. It goes on to point out that students come from different academic learning cultures, and teachers need to be aware of what students bring from their previous learning experience. Similarly, student needs in pre-sessional or in-sessional undergraduate and postgraduate courses should guide the aim and focus of these courses.

Critical thinking and a critical approach to knowledge, essential in the English learning culture, may be lacking in the students' previous learning; therefore, it must be developed incrementally throughout EAP courses. This approach infers an ability on the students' part to evaluate their own learning and aims in terms of their usefulness for their future study programmes.

EAP practitioners should be proficient in text processing and production in order to teach students how to identify different academic genres and rhetorical features. By scaffolding teaching through a text-based approach, from analysis of texts to the process of writing these texts, students are led to the task of text production.

The framework highlights the importance of language knowledge and IT skills for teachers, who need to develop a large repertoire of techniques and rationales to justify lesson plans based on student needs. They should have opportunities to observe other practitioners and reflect on

observation feedback. An ability to respond flexibly and exploit unplanned teaching opportunities is also encouraged.

The framework stresses the need for appropriate modes of assessment and consistent marking criteria. Teachers and course providers should be able to justify their assessment tools in terms of assessment outcomes and, if necessary, make changes to lesson plans and schemes of work. This evaluation of assessment tools should be viewed in terms of the appropriateness of the feedback it generates.

The profession of teaching English as a foreign language involves to a certain extent subjecting our beliefs and practices to ongoing critical self-examination and renewal. As can be seen from the above summary of BALEAP framework of competencies, EAP requires specialized knowledge. Although teaching skills are instantly transferred and equip experienced teachers with great confidence, the role and value of EAP-specific teacher training has to be taken into consideration. The sparse research into the challenges faced by teachers making the transition from EGP to EAP presents a picture of a difficult transfer, with teachers reportedly experiencing a loss of confidence or feeling de-skilled (Ding, Jones and King, 2004, cited in Alexander, 2012, p. 100).

Gemma Campion's MA dissertation (2012) on teachers' experience of moving from EGP to EAP in the UK context indicates that there are many challenges associated with the transfer. One of the main areas of concern expressed by teachers who took part in the study was the mechanics of teaching and the development of context-specific knowledge. Campion points out in her study that institutions could be doing more to support teachers' transition and to allow development and provision of greater focus and detail into EAP practice. Formal on-going teacher development opportunities are deemed essential, but at the same time it seems that a certain amount of being 'thrown into the deep end' to gain experience in the course of training or study is also desirable. Campion's research concluded that the development of context-specific knowledge takes time, and meeting the challenge requires both training and experience.

Conclusions

The Bologna declaration, along with the launch of the EHEA and the subsequent globalisation of education, has brought many changes for universities in Europe. This has helped students and academics to share educational opportunities hitherto impossible, while the indisputable dominance of the English language in academia has facilitated the global dissemination of ideas and research. In order for this to be possible, students and academics have to be able to communicate effectively through a shared understanding of the use of English for academic purposes. The first challenge for facilitators is to learn this language themselves before attempting to teach it to learners for whom English, not to mention academic English, is not their first language. Bloom's taxonomy and the BALEAP Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes are useful starting points for anyone considering a career in this field or for those teachers who are training students to study university degrees in the English medium in non-English-speaking countries.

The trend of EMI programmes in Catalan universities is set to gradually grow and gain momentum. To reap the benefits of the use of English as the language of instruction in Catalonia, the various pedagogical implications associated with the implementation of EMI must be taken into consideration. Firstly the provision of teaching staff with both appropriate language skills and methodological training is vital, as is the need for professional development in EAP and EMI for academics. Lecturers are also researchers, who must conduct, publish and present research in

English; it seems reasonable that a C1 level in English and academic literacy in their discourse community are indispensable.

Another debate in EMI is whether the English competence of students in EMI classes is a concern for language teachers and/or content teachers or whether language centres at universities should offer preparatory programmes in EAP/ESAP to provide students with the language level and academic literacy needed before entry to EMI programmes. Experiences of fruitful cooperation between language (EAP practitioners) and content teachers exist, but what seems crucial is catering for pedagogical and instructional strategies to help non-native English lecturers teaching in English to non-native English students overcome difficulties in these new teaching and learning experiences. Currently, there is a lack of training programmes available to provide pedagogical skills to EMI lecturers in Catalonia, and a formative plan that analyses the needs and concerns of academics is deemed essential.

EAP or ESAP training is needed to make the lecturers' transition to EMI smoother and more effective. Successful continuous professional development not only provides awareness but also the tools that can enhance professionals' resilience when facing difficulties. The learning process of lecturers and students ought to play a central role in the design of training courses in order to enable academic staff and students to overcome the challenges posed by EMI at universities, helping them attain knowledge, competences and personal growth. Fully qualified and competent EAP practitioners should be engaged by universities in Catalonia to help both academic staff and students achieve competence in academic discourse in English

EAP practitioners should also be encouraged to undertake research in their field in order to generate a body of academic, practice and policy orientated research that would yield valuable insights for their context and for the wider professional community.

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Biodata

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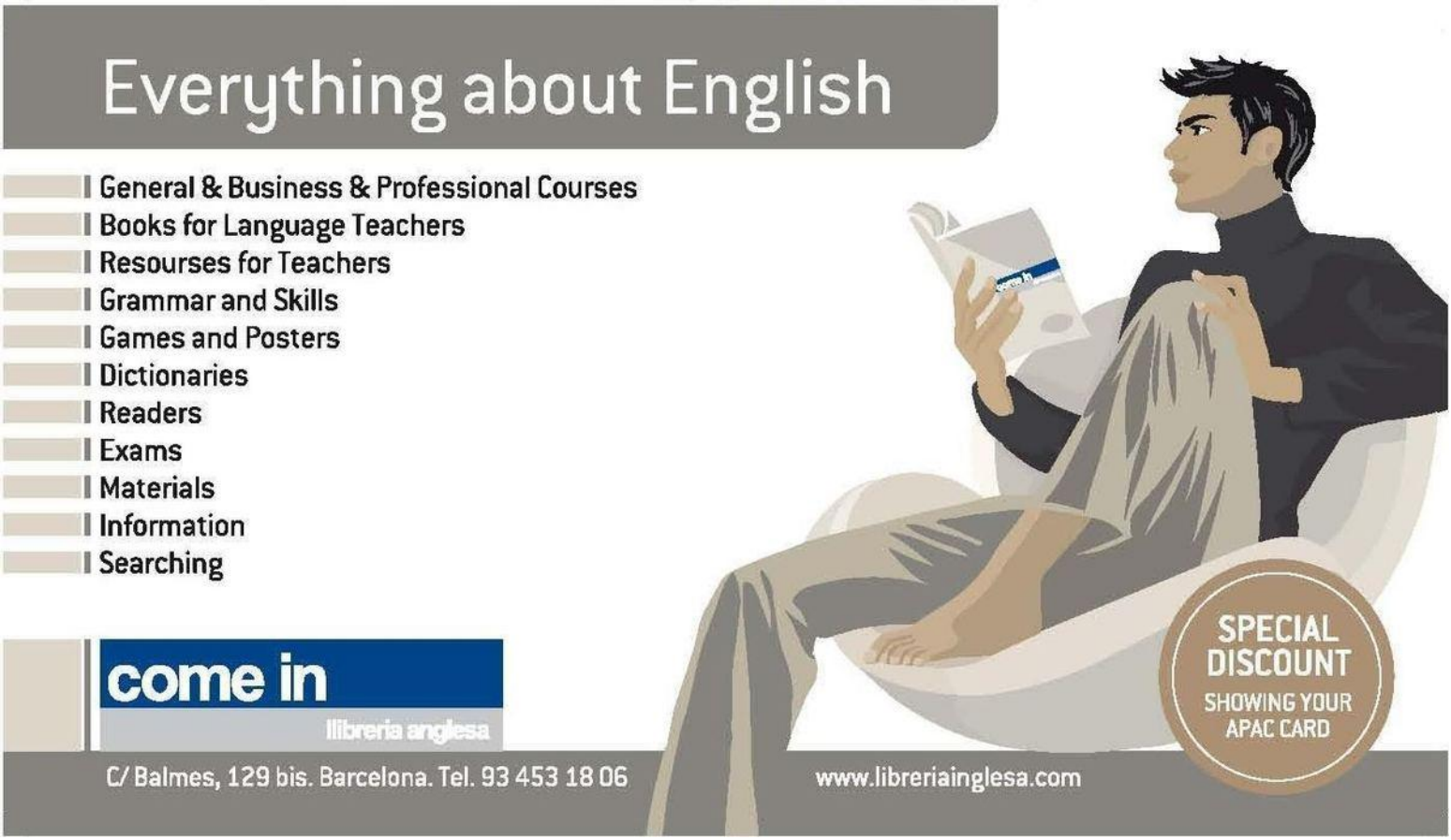
Back to the table of contents



"I'm Afraid I Can't Agree with You": Teaching Pragmatics in English as a Foreign Language Contexts

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Abstract

This objective of this paper is to raise both teachers' and students' awareness on English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) pragmatics contexts as well as to promote the teacher-researcher role. The trigger of this exploratory study was that investigations in the field of interlanguage pragmatics have proved the positive effects of instruction, especially in EFL contexts, in which pragmatics is not usually included in the classroom syllabi. The focus of the present study was to teach B2-level groups how to agree and disagree. The students were taking part in extracurricular activities aimed at preparing them to sit the First Certificate in English Exam. In the oral paper, students are usually asked to confront opinions, that is the reason why interrupting and disagreeing were the main pragmatic indicators examined. In order to test pragmatic development, a pre- and post-test design was followed. The findings go in line with previous studies which claim that instruction leads to positive effects on pragmatic development.

Introduction

We live in a multilingual world where interactions between native and non-native speakers are common. However, instructional settings are still far from reflecting what learners of a foreign language will encounter in real conversations. Classroom syllabi still focus too much on grammar aspects, when helping our students develop communicative competence should be one of the main goals in the foreign language class instead. The problem, though, is not the methodology or the opportunities for interaction. Many approaches to language teaching have already focused on improving fluency and communicative skills, such as *communicative language teaching* or *task-based language teaching* (Ellis, 2009; Richards, 2005), but fluency alone will not guarantee being successful and appropriate in a conversation (House, 1996, 2003). In fact, it is the lack of knowledge of cultural differences between languages, and how such differences affect language that will probably lead to communication breakdowns. It is, therefore, *pragmatics* which should be also considered as essential in foreign language teaching. Research in second language acquisition has indeed proved the positive effects of teaching pragmatics (Alcón and Martínez-Flor, 2008), but still pragmatics is not usually a key aspect in foreign language instructional settings.

This paper thus examines the role of pragmatics in English-as-a-foreign-language classroom contexts. The aim is not to show the benefits of teaching pragmatics, since it has already been proved, as mentioned before, but rather to present possible pedagogical proposals which can help teachers design their own lesson plans in which developing pragmatics will be the main goal. The present paper first presents some theoretical background on pragmatics and the effects of

pragmatics in instructional contexts. Then, a pedagogical proposal is presented, and finally some conclusions and pedagogical implications will be provided.

Defining pragmatics

Pragmatics has been extensively defined over the years. It has been commonly referred to as the branch within linguistics which studies how *speakers use language*, how *culture affects language*, *the choices that speakers make when using language in a particular situation and context*, *the type of language used depending on the interlocutor*, among many other definitions (Yule, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 2003). Therefore, when dealing with pragmatics, *culture*, *context* and *distance* seem to be some of the key aspects to consider. However, all these elements are relevant in pragmatics to both first and second language speakers. Native speakers of a language can sound impolite if the aspects presented above are not taken into account when interacting with other speakers. That means that not following the 'pragmatic norms' of language and culture might lead to inappropriate and impolite sequences of talk. So, if we can have breakdowns in communication in our native languages, how can non-native speakers/learners of a foreign language be pragmatically successful? Do we focus enough on foreign language pragmatics in class, so as to help our students to become pragmatically competent speakers? As we mentioned in the introduction, we probably do not, since classroom syllabi do not usually focus on pragmatic content. Likewise, the question is not only whether we should or should not teach pragmatics in the foreign language class, but also which elements we should pay attention to if we want to deal with pragmatics in the classroom.

It has been *speech act* realization which has 'historically' been considered as fundamental in the study of pragmatics. It was during the 1960s and 1970s when speech acts were defined as the *means of communication between people* and classified into different types and categories by Austin and Searle. In fact, speakers of any language are constantly performing speech acts (such as requests, suggestions, apologies, orders, compliments, complaints or refusals) when communicating. This means that one of the main pragmatic focuses in the foreign language class should be related to speech act realization. In relation to this, the issues of *politeness* and *face* have also been key elements in the study of pragmatics (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The impositive and face-threatening nature of speech acts can have a strong effect on how im/polite we can sound in social interaction. Finally, Grice's maxims (1975) have also contributed to understanding how communication is built by speakers and how different aspects need to be considered when interacting with others (*maxims* of *quantity*, of *quality*, of *relation* and of *manner*). Therefore, what can be the benefits of becoming more pragmatically aware? Well, if we become more aware that pragmatics is an important aspect in communication, and we know *when*, *how* and *to whom* we use certain speech acts, we will probably become more *pragmatically competent*. That would mean that we will have the ability to perform speech acts that are both linguistically and contextually appropriate. So, as teachers, we should not only focus on making our students develop grammar competence, or fluency, but also help them develop pragmatic competence.

Teaching pragmatics in EFL contexts

The effects of teaching pragmatics in foreign language contexts have been examined in depth during the last decade. Studies in applied linguistics have commonly found that teaching pragmatics, both implicitly and explicitly, has positive effects on pragmatic development (Alcón-Soler, 2000; Martínez-Flor, 2004; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Alcón Soler et al., 2005; Alcón-Soler 2008; Eslami-Rasekh & Mardani, 2010; Alcón Soler, 2012; Safont Jordà & Alcón Soler, 2012;

Salazar-Campillo, 2013). Such studies have commonly had a pre-/post-test design in which three groups are compared: one receiving explicit instruction; another receiving implicit instruction; and, a control group with no pragmatic instruction. The most common finding has been that those students who are instructed on pragmatics explicitly, i.e. to whom meta-pragmatic explanations are given, tend to outperform those who are instructed on pragmatics implicitly. Such advantages of the explicit over the implicit group are usually reflected in delayed post-tests, which would probably mean that explicit pragmatic instruction helps in retaining the elements taught during the instructional period. However, what seems to be clear in the studies is that only those who receive some sort of instruction are those whose pragmatic competence develops. However, little attention has been paid to pragmatics in language teaching research, and pedagogical proposals for pragmatic teaching are scarce. For instance, not much attention is paid to pragmatics in textbooks. In fact, pragmatic content in textbooks is usually dealt with in relation to language functions, with usually unauthentic input to pragmatic exchanges and little opportunity for practice (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010). As a result of this lack of pragmatic focus in the foreign language class, the following sections then provide a possible pedagogical proposal addressed to students at a B2 level who are taking First Certificate Exam preparation courses.

Teaching interrupting and disagreeing

Students who take the First Certificate Exam are usually asked to discuss a topic in groups. To do so, they would probably need to give an opinion about a topic, either agreeing or disagreeing with their group mates, and they will probably interrupt each other when they want to state their own opinion. However, as mentioned in the previous sections, different languages will perform speech acts in different ways. That is why our aim was to provide students with those expressions which sounded more native-like when disagreeing and interrupting in English. We wanted them to be aware that the way we produce such speech acts in Catalan/Spanish might be a little bit too direct when speaking in English, which is a more indirect language. That would mean that if they transfer the expressions from Catalan/Spanish there could be the possibility of sounding 'impolite' or inappropriate in English.

Our students and general design

Our students were 21 Catalan/Spanish learners of English who had a B2 proficiency level. They were teenagers and adults from 15 to 40 years old and they belonged to a middle-upper socioeconomic level. They were all taking preparatory lessons (3 hours a week) for the First Cambridge Exam and they were all using the textbook *Ready for First*. Of the 21 students, 15 received pragmatic instruction and 6 served as a control group, so the latter followed the syllabus without the pragmatic instruction. The instructional period lasted for 7 weeks and to check if there was pragmatic development we used a role-play on current issues in which opinions were confronted for the pre- and post-test. See Example 1 below.

Example 1

You work in a bank and your manager has given you a credit card with no limit. You are entitled to use it as much as you like. You agree with the idea since you have been an ideal employee for the last 3 months and therefore you start using it straight away.
You are a bank manager. You have two top employees and you are giving each of them a credit card with no limit.
You work in a bank and your manager has given you a credit card with no limit. You are entitled to use it as much as you like. You cannot believe this is happening and you do not want to accept the card. You are also trying to convince your bank manager and a colleague that having this card it is not right.

Instructional period

The instructional period covered 7 sessions of 30 minutes approximately. The aim of the sessions was to raise pragmatic awareness and to give students the opportunity to practice the pragmatic features taught. When teaching the different expressions which should be used when disagreeing and interrupting, we focused on: 1) distance with regard to the interlocutor; 2) situation; 3) intonation; 4) identity (encouraging learners to use those expressions which would suit their personality best). Below, we present how the seven sessions were organized.

SESSION 1: We tried to activate students' schemata and raise awareness about the pragmatics of interrupting and disagreeing by using some questions on different situations. They went over them in pairs and we corrected open-class. See Example 2 below (taken from http://www.macmillandictionary.com/learn/pragmatics2014.html).

Example 2

6. Which of these responses expresses disagreement most strongly?

What use is history? Do you remember our history lessons at school? Most of what they taught us was completely useless, wasn't it?

a I don't know. I don't think it's fair to say that, actually.

b I take your point, but that was probably because of the way it was taught.

c You've got a point there, but the problem was that the teachers didn't really show how it was relevant to us.

d That's true, but I think it's taught a bit differently nowadays.

SESSION 2: We used a fill-in-the-gaps exercise (see Example 3 below) to check understanding through controlled practice in groups and open-class correction.

Example 3

1. You can say that _____.
2. You're _____ me.
3. I _____ agree more.
4. I'm _____ to agree.
5. I agree _____ to a point, but ...
6. I _____ go as far as to say that.
7. I _____ your point, but ...
8. You've got a _____ there, but ...
9. _____ for yourself.
10. Don't make me _____.
11. Are you _____?
12. You must be _____.
13. _____ of the kind!

SESSION 3: We worked on stress and intonation and self-correction in groups, as Example 4 shows.

Example 4

1. You can say that again.
2. You're telling me.
3. I couldn't agree more.
4. I'm inclined to agree.

Agreeing

That's right.
You're right.
I know.
Exactly.
Absolutely.
You can say that again.
You're telling me.
I agree (entirely / absolutely).
I couldn't agree more.
(Yes.) It is / It should / They did etc.

Agreeing tentatively or reluctantly

I suppose so.
I guess so.
I'm inclined to agree.

Agreeing partially

I agree up to a point, but
I wouldn't go as far as to say that.
I take your point, but ...
You've got a point there, but ...
That's true, but ...

Disagreeing

I'm afraid I can't agree with you.
I'm sorry, but ...
Excuse me, but ...
Of course not.
I disagree.
I don't know.
Speak for yourself.
Don't make me laugh.
Are you kidding?
You must be joking.
Nothing of the kind!
Rubbish!

SESSION 4: The students practiced in pairs with some controversial issues; they had to use as many expressions as possible.

SESSION 5: They chose their 7 favourite sentences and they needed to use them during different oral activities in class accurately; also, each of them had to use a "secret sentence" as many times as possible so as to eventually "discover" each others' secret sentences to promote active listening and interaction.

SESSION 6: We watched a video to introduce some interrupting formulae and softeners and worked on a dialogue from which softeners had been removed (see Example 5 below); they completed it.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUGxPcfPzxQ

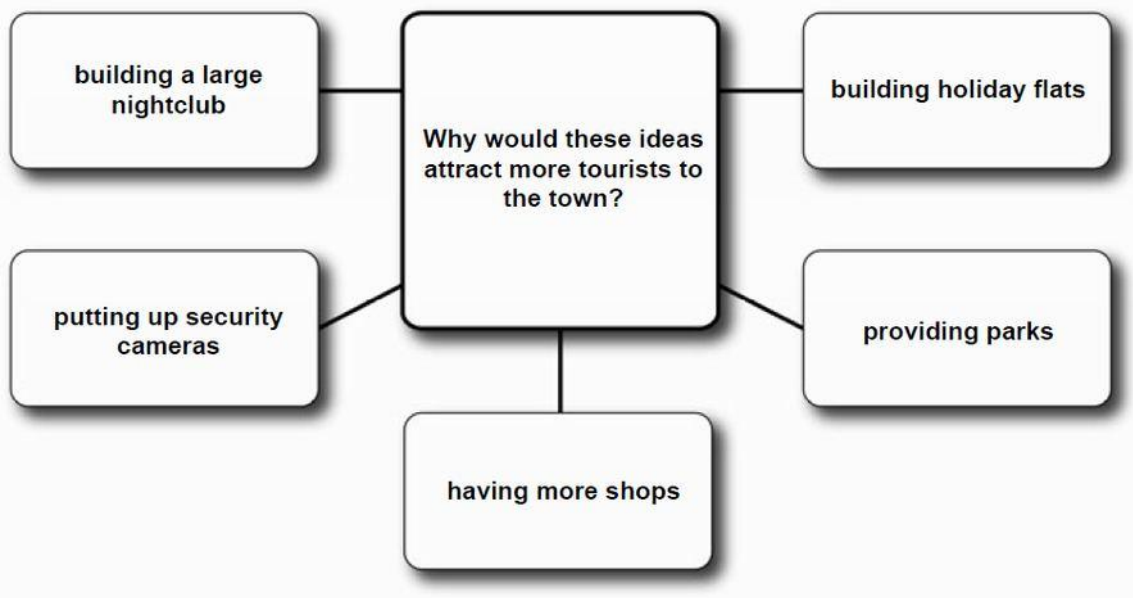
Example 5

Softeners

Excuse me, ...
Erm, well, ...
(cough) ...
Just a moment/minute ...
If I could just come in here ...
Can I just say that ...?

SESSION 7: We practised further by using First Speaking Paper material (see Example 6 below taken from *First 1*, CUP).

Example 6



After the 7 sessions, we recorded our students again to check on their pragmatic development. We analysed their productions qualitatively to examine which of the most common expressions were used when disagreeing an interrupting. Then, we quantified their production following the categories below:

Disagreeing	**Interrupting**
I think/I don't think I don't agree More elaborate expressions like: I understand your point but… I will not go as far as to say that …	But +… Yes but… More elaborate expressions like: Well Erm Excuse me Ok but …

Table 1. Data analysis.

Findings

What the findings of the analysis seemed to suggest was that some positive changes could be traced in the experimental group between the pre- and the post-test in most of the expressions used by the students. However, very few changes could be found between the pre- and the post-test in the control group.

When analyzing the use of *I think / I don't think*, students seemed to use this formula less in the experimental group, in the post-test. This could be due to the fact that they knew other expressions which could be used as an alternative. Since the control group had not been exposed to new sequences, they did not incorporate new expressions into their linguistic repertoire, so no changes could be found. Figure 1 below shows the differences from pre- to post-test.

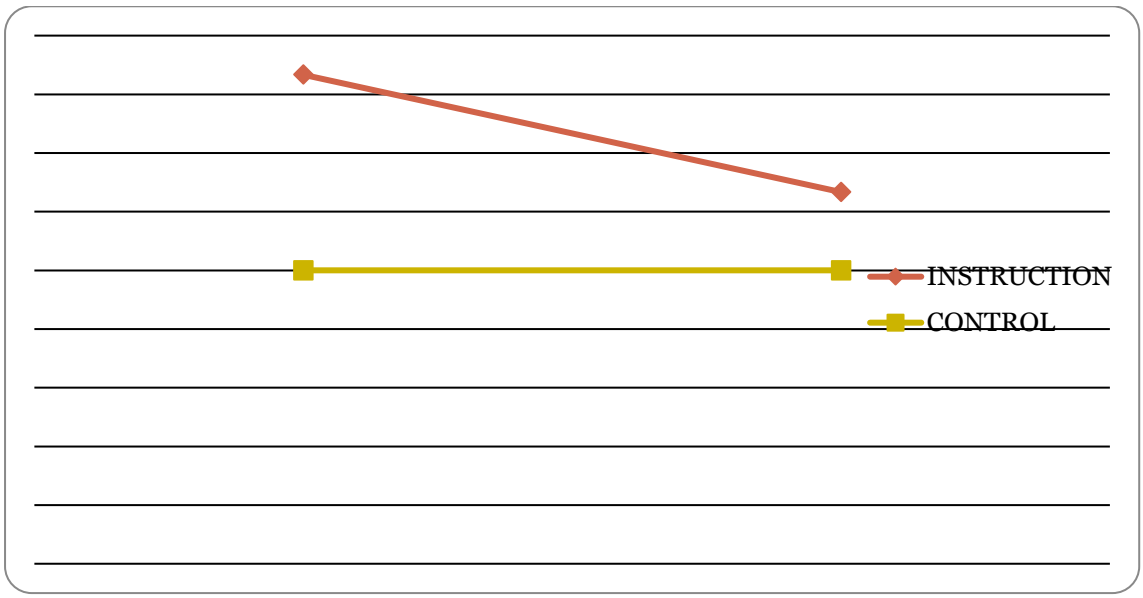


Figure 1. I think/don't think expressions

As for the use of *I agree / I don't agree*, both groups tended to overuse this strategy (from pre- to post-tests). This is probably because it is an expression which is taught at early stages of language learning. Negative transfer, though, led to an ungrammatical structure *I am not agree*. It should be highlighted, though, that in the case of the experimental group there was an increase of the formula *I disagree*, probably due to an increased pragmatic awareness, as Figure 2 shows.

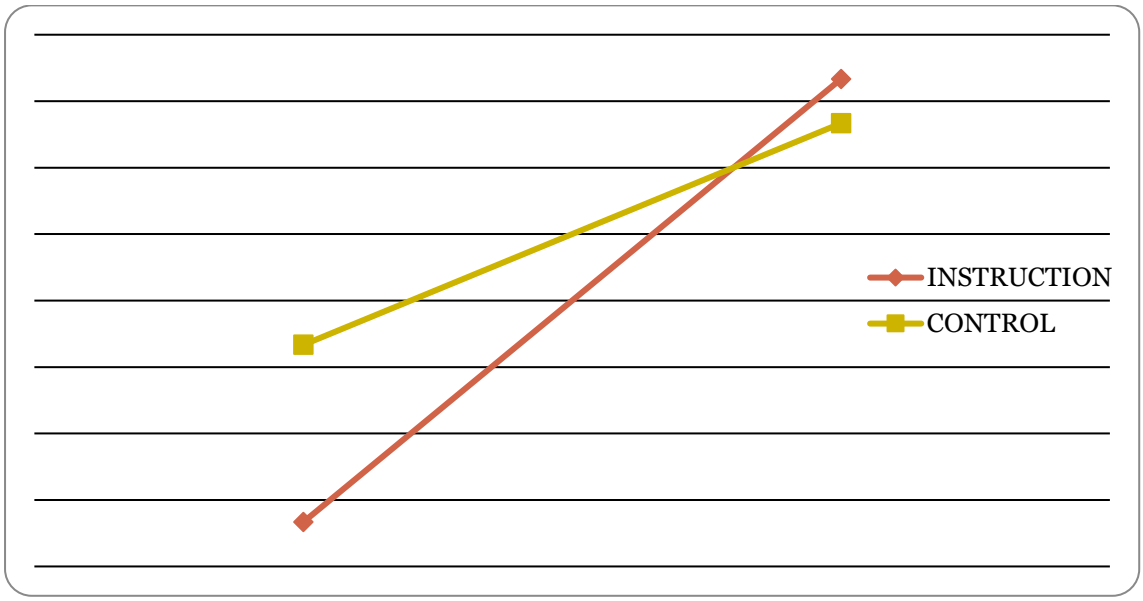


Figure 2. I agree/don't agree.

As Figures 3 and 4 seem to suggest, when dealing with interruptions, there seemed to be a decrease in the experimental group, when using *but*, which could be due to the effects of instruction. The increase in the control group might be explained by the fact that they do not have a wide variety of pragmatic formulas as in the case of the experimental group.

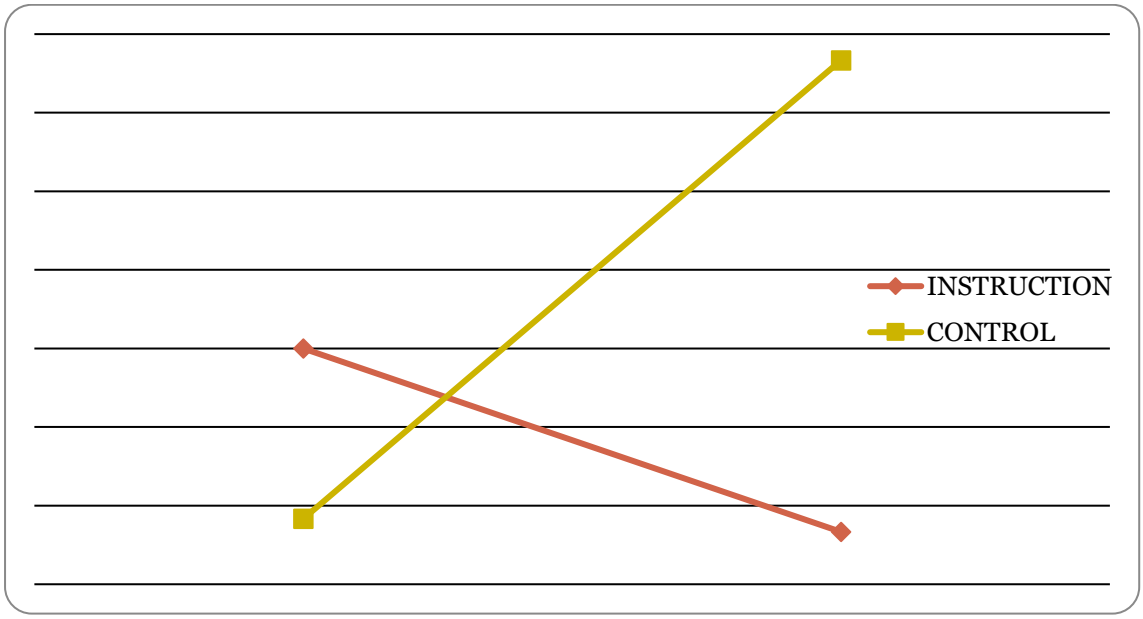


Figure 3. But + something.

In the case of *more elaborate pragmatic formulas*, only the instructed group showed an increase in these types of utterances. The expressions the students used in the post-test were those which they had been exposed to in class and which they had been using during the instructional period. Figure 4 shows the use of these formulas in both groups.

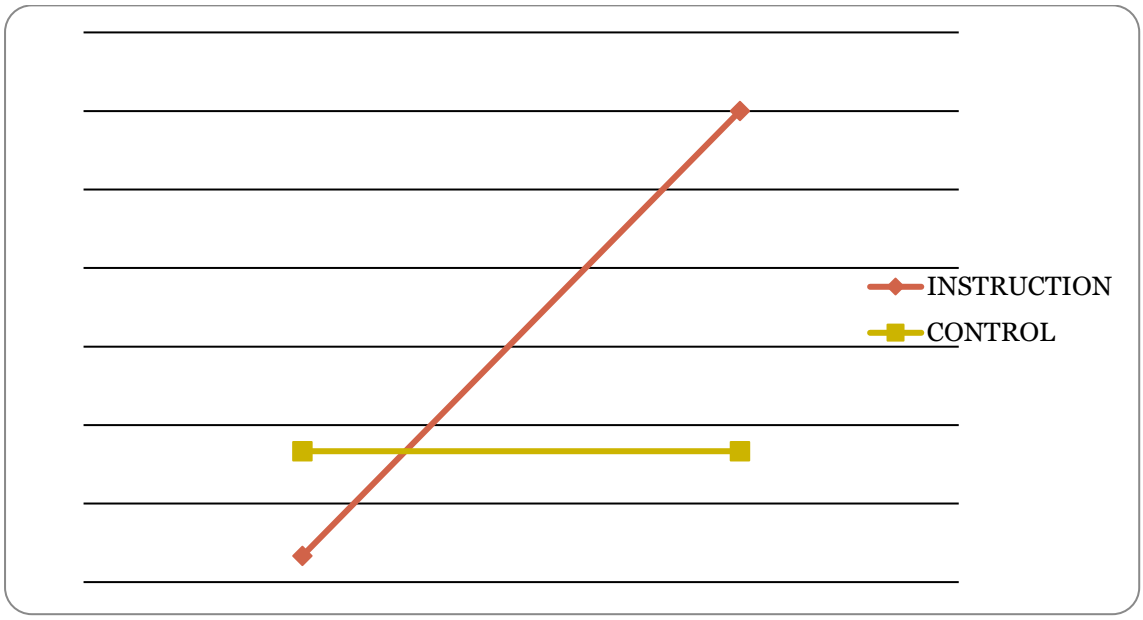


Figure 4. More elaborate expressions.

Conclusion and pedagogical implications

Therefore, in line with previous studies, the finding of this exploratory study seemed to show that teaching pragmatics seems to have positive effects on the students' acquisition of the L2 pragmatics (Alcón 2000; Martínez-Flor 2004; Koike & Pearson 2005; Alcón et al. 2005; Alcón Soler & Martínez-Flor 2008; Eslami-Rasekh & Mardani 2010; Alcón Soler 2012). The fact that some features do not show any improvement after the treatment might be explained by the short length of instruction (Pearson, 2006). However, even though the instruction period was short, the students were presented with a wide variety of formulaic expressions. It should be mentioned that if students had been presented with fewer sequences, they might have retained more. This should be examined in future experiments. Then, the role of L1 and age should also be taken into account in the future, since L1formulas might have an effect in the overuse of some sequences (as claimed by Bardovi-Harlig and Vellenga, 2012), but also age is an important aspect which should be considered. Teenagers might not be familiar with some pragmatic formulas even in their L1, since they are not common in their everyday interactions. We should then try to focus on those which are more likely to be used in their conversational contexts.

The pedagogical proposal that we present in this paper has mainly focused on raising pragmatic awareness through explicit instruction together with metapragmatic explanations. However, some of the conclusions that we drew after doing this experiment were that before starting to teach any pragmatic feature, we need to expose students to 'real' pragmatic interactions, so they can better understand what we actually mean by being polite and appropriate when we interact in the foreign language. The use of films and TV series can therefore be a rich pragmatic source of input (Barón & Muñoz, 2016). Apart from the importance of input, the way pragmatics is operationalized in class is another issue we should start considering. The use of tasks which can reflect real-life interactions might help students develop foreign language pragmatics. Trying to incorporate a *task-based teaching approach* could be a way of bridging the gap between *learning* and *speaking* 'pragmatics'.

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Biodata

Raquel Gómez studied Sociology at the UAB and went on an Erasmus year to Warwick University in England. She started teaching in the same language school she learned English in and loved it. So she did her CAP and CELTA. She spent two years in China, where she taught English and learned Chinese. When she came back, she found a job at the CIC and later on passed her Dip. With that, the door to teacher training and research opened. Nowadays she is the CIC Idiomes SC coordinator and she teaches at the UB, as well. She keeps on learning passionately.

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Back to the table of contents

Let’s be pragmatic!

The Use of Active Subtitling in a Foreign Language Classroom

Sònia González Cruz

Abstract

Subtitling has been used as a didactic tool to develop linguistic skills by means of both passive and active methods. Although many projects related to subtitling are focused on the learning of foreign languages from a passive perspective, the didactic benefits of performing this type of activity in an active way have also been empirically proved. The aim of this article is to explore the extent to which active subtitling can be integrated as a didactic activity within foreign language teaching curricula and the implications that this type of task has on students' skills. For this purpose, a subtitling task carried out in an English as a foreign language classroom is presented by way of illustration.

Introduction

Subtitling is a type of audiovisual translation which can be defined as an 'audiovisual translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained in the soundtrack (songs, voices off)' (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 8). Subtitling is a process of linguistic transference which involves a change of code from oral discourse into written speech and which is constrained by a series of spatial and temporal characteristics together with certain orthotypographical conventions. It can be intralinguistic, when the process takes place within the same language, or interlinguistic, when the information is transferred from one language into another.

Subtitling as an active didactic tool can be integrated into different educational contexts (Kruger, 2008). Several projects show that active subtitling is a very useful activity that can be applied to the foreign language learning context in order to acquire and develop different linguistic skills (Talaván, 2010; Incalcaterra & Lertola, 2014; Burczynska, 2015; Talaván & Ávila-Cabrera, 2015). Active subtitling is a translation process which implies that students are in charge of producing their own subtitles. By means of this activity, students are expected to create and edit subtitles for a given audiovisual product (Romero, Torres-Hostench & Sokoli, 2011).

1. Translation and foreign language learning

In the foreign language learning context, students are expected to acquire and develop certain linguistic skills that allow them to improve their level of that specific language. Language schools and other educational institutions are in charge of designing curricula in an appropriate and consistent way in order for students to make successful progress throughout their learning process. Many language schools tend to focus their teaching contents on a communicative approach, and, for several reasons, some of them still reject the use of translation activities in the classroom, as this could lead to an overuse of the mother tongue. However, this does not mean that translation activities do not fit within this type of curricula, as they can also be adapted to the communicative approach by promoting interactive episodes among students (c.f 4.1 Didactic context). Different scholars have promoted the use of translation activities in the foreign language classroom as a valid methodological tool.

According to Kiraly (2003), a pedagogical translation is functional to language acquisition and the translated text becomes a means rather than an end in itself, as is the case in real translation (in Incalcaterra & Lertola, 2014, p. 71). Zabalbeascoa (1990, p. 80) highlights that translation activities can be included into foreign language curricula together with other techniques, but there are several factors related to the teacher and the group of students that need to be taken into account in order for this methodological tool to be used in an efficient way. For instance, teachers need to have a good level of the students' mother tongue and they also need to be familiar with the similarities and differences between the two languages. They should also have knowledge about the theory and practice of translation. Moreover, it is important to observe if all students share the same language and if they have already reached a good level of command of their mother tongue. Once attention has been paid to all these factors and it can be stated that translation activities can be positive for all learners, they can be included into the teaching curricula. According to Zabalbeascoa (1990, p. 80), translation always needs to have a 'complementary value' in order to gain benefits from this activity in the foreign language learning context.

2. Subtitling and foreign language learning

Several studies and empirical experiments prove the validity of audiovisual material as a pedagogical resource and demonstrate the usefulness of subtitling as a methodological tool in the foreign language teaching context. Numerous didactic proposals have been created in order to promote the use of subtitling, both active and passive subtitles, in the foreign language classroom. The fact of using active subtitling as a didactic tool allows for an improvement in the students' language skills and it also involves the acquisition and development of many different types of skills.

Díaz-Cintas emphasizes the educational value of passive subtitles and states that subtitles are a tool that plays a fundamental role in the process of learning foreign languages. This type of task involves a process of visualization of already-subtitled audiovisual materials, as subtitles are only being used as support. Watching subtitled videos can contribute to developing language skills, as well as to acquiring new knowledge about cultural elements and nuances. There are several experiments that show that those students who rely on the use of audiovisual material to learn a foreign language improve their oral comprehension and production skills in a faster and more solid way (Díaz-Cintas, 2012, p. 98).

In order to counteract the passivity derived from watching already subtitled videos, innovative and motivating didactic proposals that aim at teaching students to create their own subtitles started to emerge. This active approach to the use of subtitling promotes activities that turn the student into an active agent within his or her own learning process, and therefore it completely differs from a traditional approach towards foreign language teaching.

3. Active subtitling as a didactic tool

According to Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera (2015, p. 150), subtitling as an active tool in the foreign language context can be considered to be 'a relatively new method characterized by motivating factors where the students carry out an active and practical task, which aims to imitate a professional activity within a didactic, familiar, and multimedia context'. Furthermore, this type of activity helps students acquire and develop other skills such as memory, critical thinking, and synthesis, while also promoting learner autonomy (Incalcaterra, 2011, p. 243).

Several empirical experiments show the didactic benefits which could be obtained from performing this kind of activity in the foreign language classroom. For instance, Incalcaterra and Lertola (2014) highlight the benefits of including tasks whose main objective is to create subtitles in the classroom, and they present a theoretical framework for the use of active subtitling of films which facilitates the integration of this activity into foreign language learning curricula.

Other scholars, like Talaván (2010), make use of different qualitative and quantitative methods to validate the use of subtitling as an active task in relation to the use of passive subtitles as a support, and Talaván (2010) establishes a comparison between the two different methodological tools and the benefits obtained from their use. In the same way, Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera (2015, p. 149) propose the use of both active and reverse dubbing and subtitling as L2 didactic tools in order to improve oral and written production skills, as well as general translation competence in an online university course which aims at training students to become experts in the field of English Studies. In contrast, Burczynska (2015) works with adult advanced learners of English in a language school in Poland and focuses on the acquisition of written production skills by paying special attention to grammar, spelling and advanced vocabulary.

Furthermore, some projects, such as *LeViS* (Learning Via Subtitling) (CTI, n.d.) or *ClipFair* (ClipFair Consortium, 2011), give access to online software which includes a wide variety of audiovisual materials to work with by making use of different modes of audiovisual translation such as subtitling, dubbing or voice-over. These types of projects are aimed at promoting and facilitating an active process of language learning by means of video subtitling (Díaz-Cintas, 2012, p. 106). The available software also allows language teachers to develop their own activities in order for students to create and edit their own subtitles.

3.1 Didactic benefits

On the one hand, passive subtitles are focused on the development of oral and/or written comprehension skills depending on the linguistic combination of the audiovisual material and its subtitles. On the other hand, active subtitling is a type of task which allows students to acquire and develop comprehension and production skills depending on the linguistic combination which is established for a specific subtitling task. By creating their own subtitles for a given audiovisual product, students may also develop a wide variety of linguistic, technical, pragmatic or instrumental skills. According to Diaz-Cintas (2012, p. 106), the practice of active subtitling can be used to enrich vocabulary, improve comprehension and expression skills, contextualize the language in pragmatic situations and become familiar with different social behaviors of a given foreign culture. From a more technical perspective, students are expected to acquire certain mastery of computer programs, video editors and the different formats of both audiovisual and text files.

If students are expected to produce interlingual subtitles from their mother tongue into the foreign language, they will be developing their written production skills in the foreign language. If students also work in pairs or in small groups to complete the task, they must interact with each other, and in this way, the development of oral expression skills in the foreign language will also be activated. However, if learners are told to produce intralingual subtitles, they will also be putting into practice their oral comprehension skills, as they will be working with a video recorded in the foreign language.

When following a communicative approach in the classroom, learners are involved in language activities that can be productive (oral and written production), receptive (aural, visual and audiovisual reception), interactive (spoken and written interaction) and mediating (oral and written

mediation). According to Incalcaterra and Lertola (2014, p. 74), 'the creation of subtitles by FL learners is both a receptive (audiovisual reception) and a mediating activity (written mediation) which, embedded in appropriate lesson plans, can become an integral part of the FL curriculum'. Creating subtitles for a given audiovisual product is usually an individual process in a real professional context. However, in this type of pedagogical environment, as learners are expected to activate and develop both their written and oral competences, it is interesting to promote interaction between students and turn them into active participants. In this type of educational context, not only is the final written product important, but also the process leading to the outcome needs to be considered an essential part of the whole learning task. When interacting to find a possible solution for a given problem, students can negotiate for meaning and form while they are putting into practice both written and oral skills.

4. A case study in an English as a foreign language classroom

In line with the previously explained experiments, an active subtitling task was introduced within an English as a foreign language course curriculum in order to observe its real applicability in the English classroom. The main objectives of this study were to analyze the implications of integrating this type of task into the teaching curriculum and to observe how students' writing skills evolve by means of a series of active and interactive subtitling tasks. For this purpose, two different groups of learners were selected to carry out the proposed activity within a general English course. Both groups were taking a Pre-Intermediate level course in an English language school in Barcelona. The first group was made up of 12 learners aged 20 to 45, whereas the second group was composed of 10 students aged 14 to 17. Both groups were following the same contents included in the curricula established by the language school. They also carried out the same type of active interlinguistic subtitling tasks in which they were working with two different languages: their mother tongue and the foreign language. All subtitling tasks were done in the classroom, and students worked in pairs during the corresponding sessions.

4.1 Didactic context

As has already been mentioned, some language schools still reject the use of translation in the classroom. The language school in which the experiment was carried out also followed a quite traditional approach to teaching. Most sessions were grammar-based, and curricula were based on book contents. Also, the teacher played the main role in the class, whereas the students only listened or took notes. This teaching approach, based on a presentation, practice, production method, is an artificial way of learning a second language which cannot be applied to a real context. Many classes were based on doing fill-in-the-gap exercises, and there was not even production of the resulting sentences by the students themselves, that is, the students did the exercises and the teacher corrected them. There was neither interaction nor language production. Furthermore, students were not motivated enough towards the process of learning new languages.

Thus, the aim of this didactic proposal, which consists in introducing a series of active subtitling tasks, was to promote interaction between learners and turn them into active participants in the English classroom, while the teacher turned into a guide. Although it was also necessary to follow the school's program regarding book contents, a series of subtitling tasks were integrated into the teaching curricula to promote both interaction and creativity among students. For this purpose, a task-based approach was introduced. This approach consists in designing a series of concrete and brief exercises that help to practise specific points leading to an overall aim and a final product. This type of approach facilitates creating an educational context in which students are expected to work either individually or collaboratively in order to achieve a clear and specific aim by activating their problem-solving skills.

4.2 Methodology

A series of subtitling tasks were proposed in the foreign language classroom in order for students to develop their writing skills in English. At the beginning of the experiment, students from both groups handed in a writing activity based on a description of themselves. This text was corrected and learners were given a mark. During a three-month period, all students carried out three different subtitling tasks in the English classroom. All sessions lasted an hour and a half, and learners attended English classes for three hours a week, that is, they had two sessions a week. Students were expected to create subtitles for three different audiovisual products from Spanish into English. After this period, students' writing skills were tested again by means of an e-mail where they needed to introduce themselves and ask for information about language courses. This final writing test was also corrected and marked by the teacher.

Concerning the selection of the audiovisual material, there are several factors that need to be taken into account. The audiovisual contents were selected according to the students' level of English, degree of difficulty and the students' interests and learning needs. Furthermore, it is essential to set a clear and specific didactic objective for the task. In this case emphasis was placed on the development of writing skills from a stylistic and grammar perspective. Another aspect which is relevant for designing the task is the type of assessment that will be applied; in this case the tasks can be used for both formative and summative assessment. Also, it is important to pay attention to video length, as subtitling is a time-consuming activity, especially for beginners, so videos should not last longer than 3 minutes. The aim of this task is to increase students' motivation. Therefore, the amount of work required needs to be considered very carefully, because an excessive workload could have a negative effect on the whole process. For this reason, students performed just one subtitling task per month. Another aspect which is also related to student interests is genre, as the type of video will also have a bearing on students' motivation. In addition to genre, it is important to consider whether to use videos that have already been dubbed into the students' mother tongue or if students should work with the original version.

As subtitling is a translation process constrained by a series of spatial and temporal characteristics together with certain orthotypographical conventions, these limitations should be adapted to this didactic context. As this task is not aimed at training professional translators, these characteristics can be simplified to a certain extent. For instance, in real life a subtitle contains a maximum of two lines and, at the same time, a line usually contains a maximum of 36 characters; however, in order to simplify the task for English learners, the number of characters per line may be extended to 42-45. Also, in real life a given subtitle can remain on screen for a maximum of 6 seconds, but with English learners, the time on screen can be slightly modified and extended, in the same vein as the allowances for number of characters. The orthotypographical conventions can also be simplified by adapting them to the standard writing system. Regarding spotting, which is the process through which a given in and out time is assigned to every subtitle, this can be carried out by the students or by the instructor. As the learners are translating from their mother tongue into the foreign language, they do not need to be provided with a written dialogue script as support, but if they are, the text may be spotted in advance to simplify this process. Finally, another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the subtitling program that will be used during the task.

4.3 The subtitling task

Each subtitling task is divided into three parts. During the pre-task phase, students are first exposed to different subtitled material. Then, the active subtitling task is presented, along with an introduction to subtitling and its main characteristics if necessary, and learners are provided with

specific requirements. After that, students are trained to use the subtitling program correctly if necessary (in this case, we used *Subtitle Workshop* (Spiridonov, 2013); see Figure 1). During the task, learners are expected to subtitle a given audiovisual product in pairs. Both students are in charge of writing subtitles, and the teacher is in charge of making sure that the amount of work is distributed fairly. Finally, students produce a video subtitled in English. In the post-task phase, learners are responsible for revising the videos subtitled by other pairs and providing them with feedback. To conclude the whole task, all the students receive the teacher's feedback on their final product and on the whole process of subtitling.

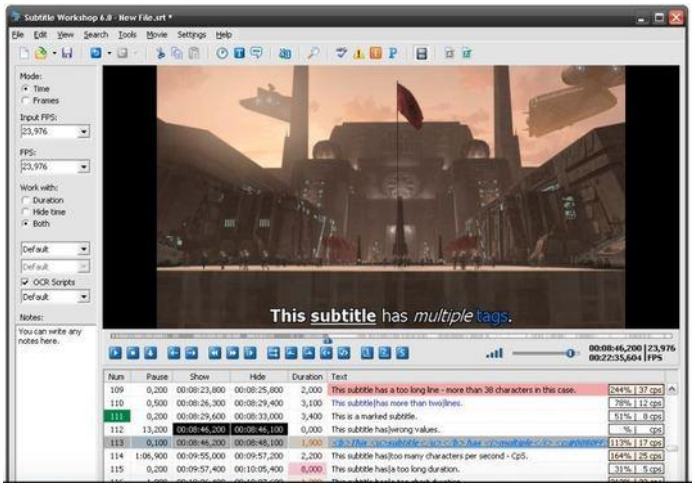

Figure 1. Screenshot of a Subtitle Workshop project, taken from the company's webpage.

4.4 General findings and linguistic achievements

Observation and experience in the English classroom showed that both adults and teenagers improved their writing skills. However, only the group of adults got better results on the final writing test, while the teenagers got similar results to their initial writing test. On the one hand, the adults were less motivated at the beginning of the new activity; however, they started feeling more comfortable when they became familiar with the task and the subtitling program. On the other hand, the teenagers were highly motivated at the beginning of the task, but they encountered problems in remaining constant and finishing each task on time.

Concerning linguistic achievements, it can be stated that the students acquired new vocabulary. Focusing on writing skills, they started to use more idiomatic constructions, and they produced much more natural and correct sentences. Subtitling is a type of audiovisual translation which involves a high-level process of linguistic reformulation due to the temporal and spatial characteristics which limit the translation process in certain ways. This led students to reformulate their texts to a larger extent and it helped them start producing shorter, more concise sentences in the subtitling tasks, as well as in the final writing test. In the same way, they also developed their knowledge about grammar issues. In the initial writing test, most students forgot to write the subject in some of their sentences, as they were not aware of the syntactic differences between Spanish and English. It is important to mention that in the final writing test they all respected the SVO order in English. Finally, an incidental improvement in oral production skills was also observed throughout the whole process of subtitling the different videos.

4.5 Viability of the task

As a final remark, it is interesting to explain the actual viability of integrating this type of task into foreign language curricula. One of the most relevant aspects is that performing this type of activity involves the inclusion of new technologies in the language classroom. It is important to note that there is free software that can be easily downloaded from the net. Although these types of subtitling programs can be used by all kinds of users, the students need to receive specific training on how to use them in an efficient way. Furthermore, some language schools still lack a full complement of necessary technological equipment to carry out these types of activities in the classroom. However, this is a quite flexible task which can be carried out either in class under the teacher's supervision or outside of class as part of the students' autonomous work. It is important to point out that before having students do this task autonomously, it is recommended that they be trained in the use of the program in class, as this may be a time-consuming activity, especially for beginners. It could also be seen as a quite repetitive task, so it is essential to design the whole task in a careful way and set a given time for each part of the activity in order for learners to obtain a great number of didactic benefits. Also, teachers must invest a lot of time in designing the activity, selecting audiovisual materials, editing videos, adapting the subtitling process and setting the didactic aims according to their students' needs.

From a pedagogical perspective, it is an innovative, appealing and motivating activity which promotes the use of authentic audiovisual material. However, it may be difficult to integrate this type of task into foreign language teaching curricula, as some curricula are often quite inflexible and language schools do not provide the necessary means and resources to change that situation. In contrast, subtitling tasks are quite flexible activities that can be carried out either individually or collaboratively, in class or outside of class. There are several skills that may be developed by means of this task, as it allows for improving both written and oral production skills. On the other hand, it can be remarked that it may lead to an excessive use of the mother tongue in the classroom, and several technical problems may arise while carrying out the task.

Conclusion

Active subtitling is a valid pedagogical tool that can be integrated into foreign language teaching curricula in many different ways. As each pedagogical context entails different learning objectives and students' needs will vary from one context to another, a given subtitling task needs to be adapted according to different educational factors. Teachers must analyze the didactic context in order to design a given task in a careful way.

Several objectives can be set depending on the specific skills which students are expected to develop by means of a given subtitling task. The different experiments and complementary research that has been carried out within this didactic field show that the inclusion of active subtitling tasks into the foreign language learning context helps students develop their linguistic competence in the foreign language. Furthermore, this type of task allows them to acquire cultural, thematic and technological knowledge, as well as develop different personal and social skills which are also involved in the process of learning any foreign language.

However, performing this type of task might lead to an overuse of the mother tongue. Language teachers are in charge of preventing an excessive use of the students' mother tongue in the classroom. They are responsible for guiding learners throughout the whole activity to guarantee that the learning process is being carried out in a successful and efficient way. Teachers are in charge of establishing the specific goals and learning objectives of the pedagogical task. They also need to choose the most appropriate linguistic combination according to the given learning objectives and the specific skills that students are expected to develop.

Finally, it is important to remark that this type of activity needs to be understood as a complementary activity within the established curriculum of a given language course. Active subtitling may be integrated within the learning contents as a methodological tool in order for students to develop their language proficiency in a quite innovative and motivating context by working either in an autonomous or a collaborative way, either inside the classroom or outside of it.

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Biodata

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Back to the table of contents

More Happy Elephants

Ian Gibbs

Introduction

We are programmed with basic psychological needs. If these needs are not fulfilled they cause us stress. At the APAC conference this year, I ran a workshop on how we can calm down our pupils by satisfying these basic psychological needs and thus facilitate learning. Specifically, these needs are Status, Fairness, Novelty, Certainty, Autonomy, Tribalism, Progress and Altruism. (More detailed explanations on can be found in my article 'The Elephants in our Classroom', published in February 2017's issue 84 of the APAC journal.) The objective of this article is to outline and share the suggestions brought up in the session. These were as follow:

Recommended Activities

Names

The most important word in our vocabulary is our own name. When we get our younger pupils to write their name next to their photo and stick it above their clothes peg next to their classroom, we are acknowledging their importance (or Status) as individuals. Another way of demonstrating this importance is by learning the names of your pupils as soon as possible – preferably before the start of the first lesson but at least by the start of the second lesson. We like it when we meet someone for the second time and they have remembered our name, it makes us feel acknowledged – it increases our feeling of Status. Someone has taken the effort to remember our name. That's great! It's exactly the same for children. The sooner you learn their names, the sooner they'll feel that you are recognising them as individuals. When I was a child, one of my teachers, Mrs Simnet, impressed everyone by memorising the full names of her entire class in alphabetical order. She could read off the register without looking at the register. We were all really impressed. Could you learn to do that?

More Choice

Increase your pupils' feeling of Autonomy by allowing them to choose more often. If we have the power to choose, it makes us feel we are in control. Feeling that we have a certain degree of control is important. Offering our students a choice allows them to exert this control. Even if it's a choice of 'do it like this or like that', it still improves their feeling of control. Such choices can be to do with the task set in class (identify useful vocabulary OR functional language), the order tasks are carried out in, the way tasks are done (written OR spoken, individually OR in pairs), the homework set (answer set questions, creative writing OR research) and even the time taken to hand homework in (you can do X by tomorrow OR Y by next week). How much choice do you give your pupils? How much choice does your director of studies give you?

More Project Work

The reason why pupils love project work is because it gives them the choice to do something they are passionate about. And we all love doing something we're interested in, don't we? Take the

opportunity to turn a normal exercise into a mini project by letting your pupils choose their own context. If they are interested in the subject, they are more likely to be motivated to put in the effort. Here we are supporting the pupil's Autonomy to decide the subject and combine it with Tribalism – the 'Tribe' the pupil identifies with. If your pupil is obsessed with Ed Sheeran, Barça, horses or Talking Tom, then they'll be happier to spend their time on the subject, even if it's in English. And maybe there's something they're fascinated by that you have never heard of. Wouldn't you be interested to learn more of what your pupils are passionate about?

Taboos

We all like Novelty. As they say – 'variety is the spice of life'. One way to get your pupils' attention is to use taboo subjects. The book 'Taboo and Issues' by MacAndrew and Martínez was mentioned a couple of times in our workshop and highly recommended as a way of approaching English via subjects more usually avoided in the classroom. Death, prostitution, swearing, guns and intimate anatomy might not sound like your typical language project themes, but your pupils will probably be captivated and you might learn a few new pieces of vocabulary, too!

Teamwork

In most classroom environments, you pupils are in competition with each other. Whether it's to get the best grade, to get the first correct answer or simply to get more of your attention and approval, the rest of the class are seen, at best, as competitors or, at worst, the enemy. Instead of being one unified tribe, your class factions into many rivalling sub-tribes. This breeds a whole range of negative feelings such as jealousy, resentment, frustration and even hatred, none of which are desirable in a learning environment. Anything we can do to help increase the sense of a unified Tribe (or team if you prefer) is a good idea. Unifying the class increases our pupils' sense of security, of belonging, and reduces stress. It can also foster cooperation and mutual support. But achieving this can be difficult. Simply putting a group of pupils together to do a task does not necessarily result in teamwork. It can often result in the stronger of them doing all the work while the weaker ones feel useless, frustrated and inadequate. So don't confuse group activities with team building activities. Successful team building activities are where the more capable students (are obliged to) encourage the less capable ones to contribute, as opposed to ignoring them or bullying them about. Such examples of this are where each member has unique information they need to share or an activity they need to do. If they have to give a joint presentation to the rest of the class, but are graded on the presentation as a whole, the stronger children will eventually learn they get better marks if they cooperate and help each other. Easier said than done but the effort is definitely worth it.

Progress

We all like the feeling of Progress. Whether you're sitting in a traffic jam, suffering a diet that's not working or forcing yourself to get up extra-early to sweat it out at the gym, it's frustrating if you're not making any visible Progress. One suggestion in our workshop was for pupils to compare their own end-of-year compositions with those written at the start. By keeping pupils' work from the start of term and getting them to compare it to their end-of-year work, they can see for themselves how they have progressed. It is deeply satisfying to see how much difference their efforts have made. Are you progressing as a teacher? How do you know?

Objectives and Procedures

Certainty is another key factor in reducing unnecessary stress. We like to be informed. If you're on the metro and it suddenly stops in the tunnel for no obvious reason, it causes mild anxiety. If we are told that the reason is because there is a broken-down train occupying the next platform and that the expected delay will be ten minutes, then our situation is less uncertain and therefore more tolerable. If we don't know what we are trying to achieve, or how we are to achieve it, then it's more difficult to be motivated. One way to do this is to make clear from the very beginning the objectives and procedures of the course. Our memories are weak at times, and so reminding pupils occasionally of the objective of their studies is a healthy idea. It's easier for our pupils to hit a target if they know what it looks like and where to find it. Do you know what all the objectives and procedures of your job are?

Variety

If your pupils neatly file into the classroom, take their seats and open their books to the page they were on last lesson, then congratulations, you definitely have them controlled but the novelty of the lesson might be lacking. We already know that variety is important, but how much variety do we sacrifice in order to make things 'easy'? Going steadily through the book may provide a reassuring Certainty but it's also predictable and might be perceived as dull. Thinking outside the box occasionally can help maintain our pupils' interest. Don't just think of doing additional activities that are not in the book. What about changing the position of tables? Or having the lesson in a different place? What else could you vary? How about having a competition between classes? (That could increase the feeling of Tribalism, too.) Whatever you do, variety is important. Consider your own life. How much of it is routine? How much of it is varied? Could you improve this ratio?

Secret Valentine

It only comes round once a year, but getting a secret valentine, where the sender details what they like about you (preferably avoiding vocabulary from the Taboo class), can help reinforce our sense of individuality, self-esteem and self-worth. It's also a nice activity for the sender as well as the receiver, as focussing on the positive characteristics of a classmate and complimenting that classmate helps to improve our feelings towards that classmate. Any activity that involves focussing on the positive characteristics of other classmates and complimenting them reinforces the feelings of Status, Tribalism and Altruism. How often do you compliment your pupils? How often do you compliment your co-workers?

Conclusion

When we prepare our classes, we usually focus on the subject matter. We consider the language content as being the main objective of the lesson. However, in order to have a healthy, positive learning environment, we also need to address the psychological needs of our pupils. This can be partially achieved by carrying out the activities mentioned above (as well as many others) and remember we are more open to learning when we feel acknowledged, accepted, secure and in control.

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Biodata

Author, productivity trainer and public speaker, **Ian Gibbs** was born in Sheffield, England. After doing his degree in Astrophysics at St. Andrews and his Postgrad in Education in Cambridge, he decided he had enough of the grim weather and came to work in Barcelona for a year – or maybe two – to teach English. One day he woke up to realise he has now been working there for 25 years, during which time he has set up one of Europe's leading educational Theatre-in-English companies: IPA Productions. He is married, has two children and a bouncy dog.

Back to the table of contents